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# Ars Artium

**An International Refereed Research Journal  
of English Studies and Culture**

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**Editors**  
**Nigamananda Das**  
**Chiramel Paul Jose**

**Editor-in-chief**  
**Vijay Kumar Roy**



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## Editorial

Hostility and pandemic have changed the global scenario. Their effects invite the human beings to imagine of a new world in which peace and prosperity necessitate to be the soul of human existence. Scientific, critical and creative endeavours create healthy environment. In the disturbed and troubled situation the like-minded intellectuals have more responsibilities to widely disseminate their scholarship and skills to achieve a common goal of well-being of all mankind.

Books, magazines and journals are the sources of new knowledge. Sometimes they quench our thirst and sometimes influence us to do something different. Time and place work as deciding factors for every effort in this direction. It has often been evidenced that difficult situation produces easy solutions. These days also we find the same thing happening. New ways of teaching and learning, new ways of working, new ways of communicating with the loved ones without meeting them face to face, and also adopting new ways of living. What seemed impossible to learn for years that became possible due to the compelling situation. Therefore, living is called an art.

World Association of Authors and Researchers aims to propagate the culture of reading, writing and publishing. *Ars Artium* and *Akshara*, both journals serve these pious purposes. The inception of *Ars Artium* was with a mission to present scholarly articles, poems and reviews of recently published books. We keep in mind the arduous research of every contributor that takes several months before they submit their work for publication. We always try not to miss any gems and always guide young talents in their queries and qualms.

This 9th volume offers ten research articles, twenty five poems by ten poets, and three reviews of recently published books. I am grateful to all contributors who kept their zeal alive and dedicated their time in reading and writing even during the period of unimaginable devastation of Covid-19. I wish you all a very happy reading.

**Vijay Kumar Roy**



# Saying 'No' to Yielding to a Compromised Culture and Identity: The Works of Amos Tutuola, Chinua Achebe and Fikre Marcos Desta

Chiramel Paul Jose\*

## Abstract

I cannot easily digest the idea of dividing our world into ordinal numbers and so, my introduction will be a little explanation of this terminology with the help of some available maps showing such divisions on the world wide web sites and briefly show how even intellectual people in the world are prone to accept such inordinate divisions blindly and swallow such false ideas to be real.

After reaching a sort of idea about the so-called 'fourth world literature' which must mostly belong to the Native American Literature and the literature produced in the major central part of Africa, I would like to start my paper with special references to "Can the Subaltern speak?" by Gayatri Spivak and "Until the lions produce their own historians, the story of the hunt will glorify only the hunter" by Chinua Achebe (*Home and Exile*). I cannot easily agree with the answer given by Gayatri Spivak herself in the above mentioned popular rhetorical question mode article, as it looks somewhat compromised with the reality. Vividly feeling the punch in her staunch criticism poised against "white men are saving brown women from brown men", and reading the line of thought set in that article, a serious reader like me would have expected the answer to the rhetorical question Gayatri raised must be "Yes, the subaltern can and must speak". Neither can I admit Gayatri to be a real spokesperson for the real 'subaltern' as we understand the term today. It is true, that Gayatri herself has met with terrible criticism from Terry Eagleton and all and she has tried to justify her implication that the subalterns cannot speak and even if they spoke, it would not be listened to, in later interviews and conferences, but all of it was very late and after she could amass wealth and popularity in large measures.

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When we think about the so-called fourth world literature, I would rather concentrate on authors Amos Tutuola and Chinua Achebe, both of them from Nigeria, and on Fikere Markos Desta from Ethiopia, who in my opinion showed the audacity and courage to hold on to their originality, traditional values, ethnographic and cultural identity in multifarious ways, never yielding themselves to come down to a compromised approach just for the sake of getting into the vogue and popularity and financial gains. Amos Tutuola having the formal education of only 6 years, mesmerized the western world with his broken English novels *The Palm Wine Drinkard* and *My life in the Bush of Ghosts*, but promoting the rich folklore of his country among the westerners.

Chinua Achebe's lecture *An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's "Heart of Darkness"* in 1975 featured a famous criticism of Joseph Conrad as "a thoroughgoing racist"; and his novels too brought out the clash of cultures in the best way possible. *The Land of the Yellow Bull* presents the adamant insistence of Goity, a Hamar Tribe girl, on sticking on to her cultural values even when she comes out of the Hamar tribe and visits Addis Ababa and then England. Such boldness and curious behaviour will not be easily digested by so called 'civilized world' where everybody is ready to shred the traditional values and heritage and swallow up everything in the name of conformity.

**Keywords:** Indigenous culture and language, Yoruba, Igbo, Hamar Tribe, Identity, Tradition, Oral Literature, Folklore

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## Introduction

While presenting this paper as a Theme Talk in the International Conference on Fourth World Literature under the aegis of Scott Christian College, Nagercoil, I had to be very cautiously using this phrase 'Fourth World Literature'. I could not easily reconcile with or swallow the idea of dividing the world into 'first', 'second', 'third' and 'fourth' categorizing the world in ordinal serial numbers. This has been a thought which used to haunt and harass me since the 1980s especially after my first trip to European countries in 1983, and hence I began my theme talk with a little bit of research output regarding the "worlding" accredited to Ms. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak who brought this idea into postcolonial vogue. "If these 'facts' were remembered, not only in the study of British literature but in the study of the literatures of the European colonizing cultures of the great age of imperialism, we would produce a narrative, in literary history, of the "worlding" of what is now called 'the Third World' (Spivak 1985: 243)." Spivak continued: "To consider the Third World as distant cultures, exploited but with rich intact literary heritages waiting to be recovered, interpreted, and curricularized in English translation fosters the emergence of "the Third World" as a signifier that allows us to forget that "worlding," even as it expands the empire of the literary discipline" (Spivak 1985: 243). Acknowledging her inspiration for 'coining' this phrase 'worlding', Gayatri has explained in her note

to the above quotation: “My notion of the “worlding of a world” upon what must be assumed to be uninscribed earth is a vulgarization of Martin Heidegger’s idea; see “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter” (Spivak 1985: 260). As observed by Marko Juvan (2019) in his Conference paper “The Concept of Worlding in Comparative Literature”: “Aware of her conceptual ‘vulgarization’ (Spivak 1985: 260), she adopted the term to criticize Western narratives constructing the colonized as dependent on the imperial cultural mission. The Third World as ‘worlded’ by the First World thus figures as the subjugated other whose otherness is to be discovered and appropriated by the colonial language” (2).

Any sensible and educated person will be wondering, how come there is the blind acceptance of the ‘hegemonial’ or ‘hegemonistic’ terms like ‘First World’, ‘Second World’, ‘Third World’ (by the by, we Indians are no better than the third world category) and Fourth World, even by the intellectuals and research-minded people like us in the world at large. One wonders, whether there is a specific body like QS (Quacquarelli Symonds) World Universities Ranking agency, or THE (Times Higher Education) World University Rankings or even NAAC which grants A+, B+ etc. to different educational institutions in India, who is responsible to decide which all countries belong to the first world, second world, third world and the fourth world for that matter. Everybody knows the answer to be negative to this question, but simply swallows it and takes it for granted. I start with this dissenting note, because I don’t want to demean myself to belong to the so called third world, where India belongs to. Or, does the adjective ‘fourth’ apply to mean only the fourth in order with regard to world literature? I am afraid, it is not, and the ‘fourth’ applies primarily to ‘world’ and not to ‘literature’.

As affirmed in the Template of [www.nationsonline.org](http://www.nationsonline.org): “The terms First, Second and Third World is a rough, and it’s safe to say, outdated model of the geopolitical world from the time of the cold war”. As remarked by the same Template, “first there was the three worlds model” which is now out of date. The same template records further:” The origin of the terminology is unclear. In 1952 Alfred Sauvy, a French demographer, wrote an article in the French magazine *L’Observateur* which ended by comparing the Third World with the Third Estate: “*ce Tiers Monde ignoré, exploité, méprisé comme le Tiers État*” (this ignored Third World, exploited, scorned like the Third Estate). Other sources claimed that Charles de Gaulle coined the term Third World, or, maybe, Charles de Gaulle only has quoted Sauvy” ([https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/third\\_world\\_countries.htm](https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/third_world_countries.htm)).

## The Fourth World

Explaining the etymology of this phrase, Wikipedia.org gives the following note:

*Fourth World* follows the First World, Second World, and Third World classification of nation-state status; however, unlike the former categories, *Fourth World* is not spatially bounded, and is usually used to refer

to size and shape which does not map onto citizenship in a specific nation-state. It can denote nations without a sovereign state, emphasizing the perceived non-recognition and exclusion of ethnically- . . . . Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells of the University of Southern California Annenberg School for Communication has made extensive use of the term *fourth world* ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fourth\\_World](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fourth_World)).

As explained by Hall (2003): “The term was coined by Mbuto Milando, first secretary of the Tanzanian High Commission, in conversation with George Manuel, Chief of the National Indian Brotherhood (now the Assembly of First Nations). Milando stated that ‘When Native peoples come into their own, on the basis of their own cultures and traditions, that will be the Fourth World’” (Hall 2003: 238).

Since the publication of Manuel’s *The Fourth World: An Indian Reality* (1974), the term *Fourth World* is synonymous with stateless, poor, and marginal nations. Since 1979, think tanks such as the Center for World Indigenous Studies have used the term in defining the relationships between ancient, tribal, and non-industrial nations and modern industrialised nation-states. With the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, communications and organizing amongst Fourth World peoples have accelerated in the form of international treaties between aboriginal nations for the purposes of trade, travel, and security.

## **One World Nations Online (OWNO)’s Explanation of the “Four Worlds”**

Here below I quote extensively from this website regarding the Four Worlds: “After the Second World War, the world split into two major geopolitical blocs and spheres of influence with conflicting political views about government and the right society.

### **First World**

The bloc of democratic-industrialized countries within the American sphere of influence, the “First World,” also known as The West.

### **Second World**

The Eastern bloc of the communist-socialist states, where the political and economic power should come from the up to now oppressed peasants and workers.

### **Third World**

The remaining three-quarters of the world population, countries that did not belong to either bloc, were considered “Third World.”

### **Fourth World**

The term “Fourth World” was coined in the early 1970s by Shuswap Chief George Manuel, it refers to widely unknown nations (cultural entities) of indigenous peoples, “First Nations” living within or across national state boundaries” ([https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/third\\_world\\_countries.htm](https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/third_world_countries.htm) on 7 August 2020).

It was Gordon Brotherston who argued that American continent was identified as the "Fourth World" in his famous work, *Book of the Fourth World: Reading the Native Americas through their Literature* published in 1992. As established in this book, at the time of its "discovery", the American continent was identified as the Fourth World of our planet. In the course of just a few centuries, its original inhabitants, though settled there for millennia and countable in many millions, have come to be perceived as a marginal if not entirely dispensable factor in the continent's destiny. Today the term has been taken up again by its native peoples, to describe their own world: both its threatened present condition and its political history, which stretches back thousands of years before Columbus.

In the lucid words of R. Reshmy (2018), "The Fourth world refers to the most underdeveloped regions in the world. The fourth world is used to describe the most poverty stricken and economically troubled parts of countries in the third world. Unlike the first, second and third worlds, the fourth world does not have any political ties and is often based on a hunter gatherer lifestyle. The fourth world covers all ethnic, racial, caste, linguistic, gender even socio-political and economic marginal"(16).

### **Three Authors Challenging the Concept of 'worlding'**

After reaching a sort of idea about the so-called 'fourth world literature' which must mostly belong to the Native American Literature and the literature produced in the major central part of Africa, and many of the indigenous tribal cultures of India and other countries, I started my paper, with special references to "Can the Subaltern speak?" by Gayatri Spivak and "Until the lions produce their own historians, the story of the hunt will glorify only the hunter" by Chinua Achebe (*Home and Exile*). I could not easily agree with the answer given by Gayatri Spivak herself in the above mentioned popular rhetorical question mode article, as it looks some what compromised with the reality. Vividly feeling the punch in her staunch criticism poised against "white men are saving brown women from brown men", and reading the line of thought set in that article, a serious reader like me would have expected the answer to the rhetorical question Gayatri raised must have been "Yes, the subaltern can and must speak". Neither could I admit Gayatri to be a real spokesperson for the real 'subaltern' as we understand the term today. It is true, that Gayatri herself had met with terrible criticism from Terry Eagleton and all and she has tried to justify her implication in pronouncing "that the subalterns cannot speak" to be because, even if they spoke it would not be listened to, in her later interviews and conferences. But all of it was very late and after she could a mass wealth and popularity in large measures as result of her article. At the same time, her thought provokingly challenging of the "worlding" could be seen as a radical step of questioning the literary conventions imposed by the westerners on the rest of the world.

## Amos Tutuola

When we think about the so-called fourth world literature, I would rather concentrate on authors Amos Tutuola, and Chinua Achebe both of them from Nigeria and Fikere Markos Desta from Ethiopia, who in my opinion showed the audacity and courage to hold on to their originality, traditional values, ethnographic and cultural identity in multifarious ways, never yielding themselves to come down to a compromised approach just for the sake of getting into the vogue and popularity and financial gains.

Amos Tutuola (1920–1997) was recognized globally for his perpetuation of Yoruba folklore tradition via novels and short stories written in unconventional English. His works, especially *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (1952) and *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* (1954), were translated into numerous European languages. Amos Tutuola having the formal education of only 6 years, mesmerized the western world with his broken English novels *The Palm Wine Drinkard* and *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*. He could achieve great significance and promote the rich Nigerian folklore among the westerners, although he was not welcomed enthusiastically by his own countrymen, alleging that it would give a bad impression of the country among the westerners due to incorrect usages of English. Amos Tutuola deemed his incorrectness of English usage should not be judged by the Europeans, and wished to communicate in English as he conceived it and comprehended in his own ways. He considered this quality of “freedom of expression” to be his trump card and in an insisting way, this ‘uneducated’ man from Nigeria succeeded in publishing his book outside his own country and continent, and denied the publishing editor any freedom to correct his ‘broken English’ and insisted on getting it published as he has scripted it.

## The Plot

*The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, told in the first person, is about an unnamed man who is addicted to palm wine, which is made from the fermented sap of the palm tree and used in ceremonies all over West Africa. The son of a rich man, the narrator can afford his own tapster (a man who taps the palm tree for sap and then prepares the wine). When the tapster dies, cutting off his supply, the desperate narrator sets off for Dead’s Town to try to bring the tapster back. He travels through a world of magic and supernatural beings, surviving various tests and finally gains a magic egg with never-ending supply of palm wine.

Although the novel was not applauded by his countrymen, way back in 1975 Taban Lo Liyong, the Acting Vice Chancellor of Juba University in South Sudan gave supreme praise to Amos Tutuola in his article, “Tutuola, Son of Zinjanthropus” published in *Critical Perspectives on Amos Tutuola* edited by Bernth Lindfors, Three Continents Press, 1975. Both in a web article entitled “Errr . . . But James Joyce is More Ungrammatical Than Tutola” (2013) and in an interview with

Yinka Tutuola, (Amos Tutuola's son) by Jeff Vander Meer (2013) a very lengthy laudatory quotation is included from Liyong's article "Tutuola, Son of Zinjanthropus":

Now, in all that he has done, Amos Tutuola is not *sui generis*. Is he ungrammatical? Yes. But James Joyce is more ungrammatical than Tutuola. Ezekiel Mphahlele has often said and written that African writers are doing violence to English Language. Violence? Has Joyce not done more violence to the English? Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* is written in seven dialects, he tells us. It is acknowledged a classic. We accept it, forget that it has no "grammar", and go ahead to learn his "grammar" and what he has to tell us. Let Tutuola write "no grammar" and the hyenas and jackals whine and growl. Let Gabriel Okara write a "no grammar" Okolo. They are mum. Why? Education drives out of the mind superstition, daydreaming, building of castles in the air, cultivation of yarns, and replaces them with a rational practical mind, almost devoid of imagination. Some of these minds having failed to write imaginative stories, turn to that aristocratic type of criticism which magnifies trivialities beyond their real size. They fail to touch other virtues in a work because they do not have the imagination to perceive these mysteries. Art is arbitrary. Anybody can begin his own style. Having begun it arbitrarily, if he persists to produce in that particular mode, he can enlarge and elevate it to something permanent, to something other artists will come to learn and copy, to something the critics will catch up with and appreciate" (As quoted in the web article of Brittle.com, retrieved from: <https://brittlepaper.com/2013/11/joyce-ungrammatical-tutuola/> on 20 August 2020 and the interview report made by Meer, Jeff Vanders (2013) retrieved from: <https://weirdfictionreview.com/2013/01/amos-tutuola-an-interview-with-yinka-tutuola-by-jeff-vandermeer/> on 28 August 2020).

It should be noted that as reported by Jeff Vander Meer (2013) in his article "Amos Tutuola: An Interview with Yinka Tutuola", Yinka Tutuola the son of Amos includes the same lengthy quotation as a means of concluding the answer given by him to the question "What are your thoughts about the claim that some of the positive early Western reactions to Tutuola's work were, in a way, racist?" raised by the interviewer Weirfictionreview.com to him.

Similarly, Timothy Temilola Ajani (2001) in his PhD dissertation described that "Tutuola decided to change his name from Olatubosen (his given name, meaning 'wealth or honour is still increasing') to Amos (most probably his baptismal name), a name reminiscent of the biblical fiery prophet of righteousness in the Jewish Old Testament" (95). Ajani (2001) further explained Tutuola's changing his name Odegbami (his family name, bearing loyalty to the deity Ogun) to Tutuola, his father's given name (meaning 'fresh wealth') and thus eschewing affinity to the deity in one's name (95) and further established: "In this name lies the history of Tutuola's transformation as well as an important key to understanding his works, works that mix Yoruba beliefs and cosmology with Christian beliefs and western technology

and transfer underlying Yoruba linguistic structures into English to produce writings that appeal to both Yoruba and English speakers alike” (95). Ajani affirmed again: “Achebe is known to have referred to Tutuola as ‘the most moralistic of African writers’ while Soyinka has popularized his works among the masses through theatrical performances” (99).

Ajani in his PhD dissertation tried to explore, in part, “this thorny issue of Tutuola’s language – why he wrote the way he did, and the linguistic principles that underlie his experimentation with the English language (EL)”, and in the conclusion of his unpublished dissertation, Ajani (2001) avers:

What Tutuola was doing in essence was to think in Yoruba, then translate his thoughts into English before putting them into writing. The end result of this linguistic alchemy was an English language touched by, then molded and shaped by Yoruba worldview and thought processes, a new type of English that Afolayan, another Yoruba and a distinguished Professor of English, would later on refer to as ‘Yoruba English’, and an internet reviewer would describe as having the ‘cyclical nature of extended drumming’, a good reminder of the Yoruba language itself, a tonal language that uses the ‘talking drum’ as one of its means of communication through an artful combination and manipulation of three tonal system of the language (134).

*The Palm-Wine Drinkard* is, in fact, a classic quest tale in which the hero, a lazy boy who likes to spend his days drinking palm wine, gains wisdom, confronts death, and overcomes many perils in the course of his journey. The book has been translated into 11 languages. Tutuola followed up his first book with *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* (1954), which reiterates the quest motif through the experiences of a boy who, in trying to escape from slave traders, finds himself in the Bush of Ghosts. Another quest is found in *Simbi and the Satyr of the Dark Jungle* (1955), a more compact tale focusing upon a beautiful and rich young girl who leaves her home and experiences poverty and starvation. In this and the books that followed—*The Brave African Huntress* (1958), *The Feather Woman of the Jungle* (1962), *Ajaiyi and His Inherited Poverty* (1967), and *The Witch-Herbalist of the Remote Town* (1981)—Tutuola’s rich vision imposes unity upon a series of relatively random events. His later works include *Yoruba Folktales* (1986), *Pauper, Brawler, and Slanderer* (1987), and *The Village Witch Doctor and Other Stories* (1990).

As the Biographies section of [www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com) avers: “Tutuola’s vivid presentation of the world of Yoruba mythology and religion and his grasp of literary form made him a success among a wide British, African, and American audience. The theatrical and operatic versions of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* made by others have also proven popular” (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Amos-Tutuola> on 31 January 2018).

As revealed by Timothy Temilola Ajani (2012): “Using three of Tutuola’s works – *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (1952), *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* (1954), and *The Brave African Huntress* (1958) – as corpus for this linguistic analysis, [Ajani’s] dissertation tried to show how the Yoruba language (YL), among others, has exerted a profound influence on EL as used in present day Nigeria” (2). Francis B. Nyamnjoh (2015) categorically remarked: “His stories are contributions to his mission of keeping alive and relevant African ways of knowing and knowledge production, and fending off the one-dimensionalism of resilient colonialism and the ambitions of completeness which it claims and inspires” (3).

## Chinua Achebe

As observed by Paul Bisceglia in his article “Beyond Chinua Achebe: Five Great African Authors You Should Read Right Now”: In a 1994 interview with the *Paris Review*, Chinua Achebe, the world’s most widely-read modern African author, said that recording a people’s history is not a one-man job. The Nigerian-born writer explained he wanted to paint a more accurate picture of African culture than the one portrayed by the white authors he read as a boy, growing up:

I was introduced to the danger of not having your own stories. There is that great proverb - that until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter. . . . Once I realized that, I had to be a writer. I had to be that historian. It’s not one man’s job. It’s not one person’s job. But it is something we have to do, so that the story of the hunt will also reflect the agony, the travail—the bravery, even, of the lions’. (<https://www.smithsonianmag.com>)

Achebe, who was born on November 16, 1930 and died at age 82 in 2013, leaves behind a legacy of success in telling the other side of the story. His robust oeuvre includes critically acclaimed novels, poems and essays. His first and best-known novel, *Things Fall Apart*, required reading in schools across America, was translated into more than 45 languages, and sold more than 10 million copies worldwide.

Jonathan Kandell reported in *The New York Times* on March 22, 2013 in his article “Chinua Achebe, African Literary Titan, Dies at 82” and described Achebe to be a “towering man of letters”:

*Things Fall Apart* gave expression to Mr. Achebe’s first stirrings of anti-colonialism and a desire to use literature as a weapon against Western biases. As if to sharpen it with irony, he borrowed from the Western canon itself in using as its title a line from Yeats’s apocalyptic poem “The Second Coming.”

“In the end, I began to understand,” Mr. Achebe later wrote, “there is such a thing as absolute power over narrative. Those who secure this privilege

for themselves can arrange stories about others pretty much where, and as, they like” (Kandell).

Chinua Achebe’s lecture *An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s “Heart of Darkness”* in 1975, featured a famous criticism of Joseph Conrad as “a thorough going racist”; and his novels too brought out the clash of cultures in the best way possible. Chinua Achebe (1930-2013), in fact, had published his first novel *Things Fall Apart* in 1958. Achebe wrote it in response to European novels that depicted Africans as savages who needed to be enlightened by the Europeans. Achebe presents to the reader his people’s history with both strengths and imperfections by describing for example, Igbo festivals, the worship of their gods and the practices in their ritual ceremonies, their rich culture and other social practices, the colonial era that was both stopping Igbo culture and also brought in some benefits to their culture. *Things Fall Apart*, therefore, directly battles with the misleading of European novels that depict Africans as savages into a whole new light with its portrayal of Igbo society, and examines the effects of European colonialism on Igbo society from an African perspective. Achebe’s primary purpose of writing the novel was that he wanted to educate his readers about the value of his culture as an African. *Things Fall Apart* provides readers with an insight of Igbo society right before the white missionaries’ invasion on their land. The invasion of the colonizing force threatened to change almost every aspect of Igbo society; from religion, traditional gender roles and relations, family structure to trade.

Consequently, Achebe blamed the white missionaries’ colonial rule and/or invasion for the post-colonial oppressed Igbo culture; this oppression can be seen in terms of the oppressed social coherence between the individual and their society. Furthermore, Achebe tried to educate readers extensively about Igbo society’s myths and proverbs. Achebe (2012) has shared this detail:

James Welch [Achebe’s Professor of Religion] said to me, ‘We may not be able to teach you what you need or what you want. We can only teach you what we know.’ I thought that was wonderful. Welch helped me understand that they were not sent there to translate their knowledge to me in a way that would help me channel my creative energies to tell my story of Africa, my story of Nigeria, the story of myself. I learned, if I may put it simply, that my story had to come from within me (41).

Before Achebe wrote *Things Fall Apart*, all the novels that had been written about Africa and Africans were written by Europeans. Mostly, the European writings described Africans as uncivilized and uneducated persons. The Europeans, seeing that they thought of themselves as more advanced than Africans, were determined to help Africans shift from the old era into the modern era of civilization and education.

As Sickels (2012) observes: “*Heart of Darkness*, for instance, by Joseph Conrad was one of the most read novels around the time of its publication in 1899. Conrad

described Africa as a “wild, ‘dark’, and uncivilized continent”. Following Conrad’s novel in 1952 was *Mister Johnson*, a novel by Joyce Cary. Like *Heart of Darkness*, *Mister Johnson* was also quite a popular read; its reviews suggest it was a more popular read than *Heart of Darkness*. According to Sickels (2012), *Mister Johnson*, describes the novel’s protagonist Mr. Johnson generally as a “childish, semi-educated African who reinforces colonialist stereotypes about Africa”. Based on the descriptions of Africa and its people by both Conrad and Cary, it comes as no surprise that Achebe and other African writers began to emerge and tell their story of Africa and its people. Not only were Conrad and Cary’s novels a misrepresentation of Africa, they were also humiliating to its people. It is through the insights of *Things Fall Apart* that the world became more appreciative of Africa and its people and at the same time the truth surrounding the stereotypical ideas that once existed about Africa began to appear in a much clearer light.

He gained worldwide attention for his novel *Things Fall Apart* in the late 1950s; his later novels include *No Longer at Ease* (1960), *Arrow of God* (1964), *A Man of the People* (1966), and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987). Achebe wrote his novels in English and defended the use of English, a “language of colonizers”, in African literature. A titled Igbo chieftain himself, Achebe’s novels focus on the traditions of Igbo society, the effect of Christian influences, and the clash of Western and traditional African values during and after the colonial era. His style relies heavily on the Igbo oral tradition, and combines straightforward narration with representations of folk stories, proverbs, and oratory. He also published a number of short stories, children’s books, and essay collections. Upon his return to the United States in 1990, he began an eighteen-year tenure at Bard College as the Charles P. Stevenson Professor of Languages and Literature. From 2009 until his death, he served as David and Marianna Fisher University Professor and Professor of Africana Studies at Brown University. Speaking about the role of the writer in Africa, Achebe (2012) avowedly acknowledged: “What I can say is that it was clear to many of us that an indigenous African literary renaissance was overdue. A major objective was to challenge stereotypes, myths, and the image of ourselves and our continent, and to recast them through stories—prose, poetry, essays, and books for our children. That was my overall goal” (59).

### **Fikere Markos Desta**

*The Land of the Yellow Bull* presents the adamant insistence of Goity, a Hamar Tribal girl on sticking on to her cultural values even when she comes out of the Hamar tribe and visits Addis Ababa and then England. Such boldness and curious behaviour will not be easily digested by the so called ‘civilized world’ where everybody is ready to shred the traditional values and heritage and swallow up everything in the name of conformity. The famous



**Fig. 1**

travel writer Giulia Raciti in her article “Omar Valley – The Hamar Tribe, Bull Jumping and the Evangadi” and tattoo anthropologist Lars Krutak in her article “Ethiopia’s Last Frontier: The Bloody World of the Hamar Tribe” share their personal encounters and experiences in this tribe and give some of the pictures to better understand what is described in the novel *The Land of the Yellow Bull*. Figure 1, a photograph by Giulia Raciti depicts the dress pattern of the Hamar girl as described with regard to Goity Anteneh who did not conform herself to the western way of dressing in Addis Ababa or in England (See Fig.1).

The famous tattoo anthropologist Lars Krutak has described the Omo valley in the South western Ethiopia as the “Poisoned Paradise”:

The Omo Valley has been described as Ethiopia’s ‘poisoned paradise’ because although its landscape is at times extremely beautiful, especially after the rainy season when the verdant valley is filled with plant life, the rest of the year it sizzles in extreme heat much like the Arizona desert. . . . Largely undisturbed and little visited until the recent influx of tourism development, it is in this harsh environment that exotic tribes with animistic religions and ancient customs have remained relatively intact (<http://www.larskrutak.com/ethiopia-last-frontier-the-bloody-world-of-the-hamar-tribe/>).

Two very important events enshrining fundamental moments in the life of every man for the social life of its inhabitants are poignantly described in *The Land of the Yellow Bull*. These two events, which take place one after the other, are illustrative of a culture rooted in the traditions and tell a lot of the tribal way of thinking. These are the Bull Jumping (the jumping of the bull) and the Evangadi (night dancing) which are described in the novel with the point of view of the British Anthropological Researcher Charlotte Alfred.

The famous travel writer Giulia Raciti describes her first hand experiences among the people of Hamar and their traditional values with the help of some pictures (<http://www.viaggiare-low-cost.it/en/omo-valley-the-hamar-tribe-the-bull-jumping-and-the-evangadi/>).



**Fig. 2**

The most important moment in a man’s life, or rather for the male member of the tribe, coincides with the passage from youth to adulthood, passage that requires a very picturesque celebration, evocative and even controversial, and a physical test that literally, lays bare the alertness, the strength and the virility of the young boy. This step takes place during the jumping of the bull (bull jumping), the celebration that is distinguished in two stages: the whip-lashes by the “new men”, i.e. those who have jumped the bull recently, to the women of the family of the boy who will have to jump the bulls who, to show their love for him, will let themselves be whipped until they bleed (See Fig. 2).

And the second part, i.e. the jumping of the bulls. The boy, completely naked, will have to jump and run on the back of 8 bulls and only when this is done three times, without falling (See Fig. 3), he can retire in the bushes with his friends, following the di (night dance), until the family will announce who will be the future wife (the first wife is chosen by the family).



**Fig. 3**

## **Addis Ababa and Bull Jumping**

This aspect of the bull jumping is strongly opposed by Ethiopia that would like to abolish this moment but to only maintain the successive part, or rather the jumping of the bulls. In fact, the Hamar tribe to Addis that the day they stop venerating their GODS giving up the celebrations and so to their own cultural traditions then they might think it over. An answer that means NO, we do not want to abolish this part of the tradition because it would mean for us to give up an important part of our society, traditions that from the outside are not easy to understand.

It's true, it is not nice for us to see women being flogged, but it is also true that it is the women who, shouting and showing the body pushing towards the men, grasping their arms vigorously and persistently, even when he, tired of all this refuses, finds himself forced to do so. The more scars you have (remember that the scar has a value in tribal communities), the more you have shown to love the future jumper (remember that they are all women of the family, except the mother who, in the meantime prepares food for the celebration). It is, therefore essential to approach this event knowing that there will be blood and do not judge these gestures in which are concerned symbols and deep-rooted traditions important to the community. I asked my Hamar friends first if really the women are happy to be hurt and the answer is univocal: YES. This is their way of living family and community relationships, the case to say a kind of "blood pact".

In the meantime that the family women allowed themselves to be flogged, the mother of the jumper organized instead the feast which that night would happen in the village, with the participation by all those by standers who do not want to miss the incredible, tireless and sensual dance of the night: the Evangadi.

The group of men in a semicircle sings striking up music where there are no instruments, but only voices (See Fig. 4). The women in the group are in front, next

to the largest of the village tree under which the celebrations start. The first moment is all male, they sing, jump, dance, as the women slowly arrive to form the group, the sensual and some what promiscuous dance of the night begins.

A chase between him and her, in which she escapes from his invitation and ends with a great final jump of the man protruding his pelvis towards the woman. The meat in the meantime is left to roast, the technique reminds me of that in Argentina. A slow cooking due to the fact that the animal is not put on the fire but at the sides. The old drink and chat in the shade of the open hut that serves as a gazebo. Giulia Raciti affirms: “I danced with them, I jumped and I was not fast enough to run away from his jump at the final part”.



Fig. 4

As reported by Lars Krutak:

Before a Hamar male can prove himself as a warrior on the field of battle, he must first prove to his peers and relatives that he can become a man. And as long as there have been cattle in the Hamar universe, there has been the bull-jumping ceremony called the *bullah*.

Failure to jump and then run across the backs of a dozen or more dung-laden bulls is one thing, but when there is a crowd of several hundred family members cheering you on (and who will whip the living *HELL* out of you if you don't succeed!) that is another. Most Hamar men prefer death over failing at the bull jump, and if you succeed your name will be mentioned in folk songs and soon enough you'll have a new wife. Even young men who are crippled or blind can participate, and in such cases they are either lifted over the backs of the cattle or are allowed to run under their necks. (<http://www.larskrutak.com/ethiopias-last-frontier-the-bloody-world-of-the-hamar-tribe/>).

As Lars Krutak observed: “Depending on the number of enemies he has slain, the Hamar warrior is also allowed to have his chest scarified with vertical rows of *pala* or “hero scars” (Krutak) (See Fig. 5).

She reproduces also the pictures of ‘scarified Hamar women at Turmi market (Krutak). Hamar women also wear intricately beautiful scars like their male counterparts. In some villages I was told that if a man has no more room on his body to tally his “kills” through scarification, then one of his wives



Fig. 5

(the Hamar are polygamous) can signal this information on her skin (See Fig. 6); each line of scars is said to represent one enemy killed.

Lars Krutak describes these scars on woman's body skin to be the "Beauty marks of the Hamar". She further observes: "One Hamar woman named Gule stated, 'When you bleed, you lose weight and become weak'. But the women still get scars, not because we are forced to, but because we want to".



**Fig. 6**

## Conclusion

It is true that we have seen authors like A. K. Ramanujan, Arundathi Roy and Salman Rushdie who joined hands with the provoking challenge launched by Chinua Achebe's "*until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter*" as well as the radical questioning of the 'worlding' brought to vogue by Gayatri Spivak and were bent on holding on to their culture and identity in their works. Yet, I wish to conclude this study with the attitude of Goity Anteneh the Hamar girl, when she was requested by her husband Kello Gorra and their mutual friend Charlotte Alfred to change her Hamar way of dressing only with a goat skin skirt, in order to comply her with the sophisticated dressing pattern of the more 'civilized' Addis Ababa society: "How dare you humiliate me by asking me to put off my forefather's dress? Why should I pretend? Why should I change my traditional dressing for the sake of likeness?" Goity fumed with anger... "Why have you gone to educate our self if there is nothing courageous that tightens our relationship with the past" Goity asked rhetorically (Desta, *The Land of the Yellow Bull*, 353-354). Later on Kello admitted: "Goity you taught us that freedom is the right to choose, acknowledge and respect the right to exist as we are. . . . We are wrong Goity. We asked you to throw away your confidence and hope" (Desta, *The Land . . .*, 355).

Mackenzie Finley in a web article quoted from Di Maio, *Tutuola at the University* (148), and witnessed that during his lecture series at University of Palermo, Italy Tutuola explained: "As much as I could [in my novels], I tried my best to bring out for the people to see the secrets of my tribe—I mean, the Yoruba people—and of Nigerian people, and African people as a whole. I'm trying my best to bring out our traditional things for the people to know a little about us, about our beliefs, our character, and so on" (<https://news.clas.ufl.edu/constructing-identities-amos-tutuola-and-the-ibadan-literary-elite-in-the-wake-of-nigerian-independence/>). I would wind up this study giving this clarion call to feel free with experimenting with the English language without moving away from one's own individual country's native identity and never aspiring at achieving only the 'Queen's English' as our

bench marks and trying to eschew blindly following whatever the Westerners approved. Transferring our native culture and identity to the world at large must be the paramount thrust of our usage of English language.

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## Beckoning of Lost Eden: Use of Myth in A. D. Hope and Temsula Ao

*Arun Kumar Mukhopadhyay\**

### Abstract

Myth has been used in literature both as archetype as well as structure so as to create a cultural contemporaneity of human experience by situating man in a larger continuum of time and space. Australian poet A. D. Hope who admittedly aligns himself with European creative tradition, also employs myths while interrogating some of the most puzzling of human questions. His incorporation of myths and legends as if pleads for a re-interpretation, re-structuring and re-moulding of the 'deadened present' to provide appropriate symbols for expressing a meaningful impression with the suggestion of a system of surviving values. For example, in the poem "Australia", Hope's lament for lost cultural roots brings into consciousness the urge for some cataclysmic regeneration of the nation as implied in the mythic images such as the 'sphinx' and the 'stone lion.' Likewise, the overall tenor of the poetry of North East India also articulates an urge for reclaiming the lost identity, the lost Elysium of peace amidst the cacophony of traumatic experience of exile, terror and migration. For Temsula Ao, storytelling is a powerful weapon of subversion, of protest, representing the power of man in shaping reality through language. In the poem "The Old Story Teller", the agency of storytelling with fables and tales pertaining to mystic rivers and magic mountains, gestures to a possibility of change with a simultaneous conviction of a writer's 'racial responsibility' in the urge for 'perpetuating the existential history and essential tradition' in the posterity and thus providing the world of readers a rich storehouse of North-East Indian folk-lore. This paper deals with the poetry of these two poets who belong to different countries and yet negotiate more or less similar kinds of crises facing the artistic urge for self-definition.

**Keywords:** Lost Elysium, Cultural roots, Mystic rivers, Magic mountains, Essential traditions

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Too well I see and rue the dire event,  
That with sad overthrow and foul defeat  
Hath lost us heaven, and all this mighty host  
In horrible destruction laid thus low...  
Though all our glory extinct, and happy state  
Here swallowed up in endless misery (Lines 134-137 & 141-142).

This excerpt from Milton's *Paradise Lost* (Book 1) sounds to be very much emblematic (though in an oblique way owing to the implicit difference between the role of the speaker here and that of colonized others), of the experience of any writer or creative artist who represents a nation that entails a history of colonization. As a palliative for the trauma of an ignoble present, the poet or the artist resorts to storytelling that as an agency, seeks to rejuvenate the fossilized past to provide appropriate symbols for expressing a meaningful impression with the suggestion of a system of surviving values. In this literary project of creating self-image, myth has been used both as archetype as well as symbol and the writer seeks to show him/herself located at a wider space beyond the disturbing present. My paper deals with two poets who belong to different countries and yet negotiate more or less similar kinds of crises facing the artistic urge for self-definition.

Australian poet A. D. Hope who admittedly aligns himself with European creative tradition, employs myths while interrogating some of the most puzzling of human questions. As a modern poet yet with a strong penchant for tradition, A. D. Hope firmly believed that myth should be reinterpreted according to poetic needs, and should be fully justified according to the current social and political circumstances. In his use of myth one further detects an engaging conjunction of psychology and literature. The major aspects of Hope's poetry include the 'man-woman relationship' with an overt celebration of primitive vitality and, though he has used a wide range of myths such as Greek, Roman and Indian to mention a few, the general tone of erotic mysticism in Hope's poetics often leads a critic like Paul Kene to dub Hope as "a poet of Edenic Myth" (Kane: 1996: 148). Yet for a careful reader, the poetic insinuation of a vision wider than the physical is too obvious to be missed. For example "Imperial Adam", one of the classical poems of A. D. Hope, shows under the façade of male-dominance in sex, the poetic advocacy for the true and ideal sort of companionship between man and woman. In the ending part, the persona seems to have looked askance at the bestial pleasure of orgasm in the name of sex and implies the seed of destruction (in the image of 'the first murderer') in the act of procreation: "And saw its water break, and saw, in fear / Its quaking muscles in the act of birth, / Between her legs a pigmy face appear, / And the first murderer lay upon the earth. ("Imperial Adam" 41-44).

Another masterpiece "The Return of Persephone" subtly expresses 'the renewal and growth' of 'love' (instead of that of the 'grain' as traditionally held) which is yet another very important aspect of human life in Hope's poetics and through this

myth, the poet seems to disapprove the destructive impulses of men unleashed in the form of universal violence and urge women to retain their natural sexuality and Love (Eros) in order to drag their strayed partners back from this pursuit of violence.

In the poem titled “What the Serpent Really Said”, once again the readers come across Hope’s erotic mysticism through an ironic rehearse of another mythic proposition. Here in a seductive speech to Eve, Satan (in the guise of a serpent) tempts the latter to taste ‘the first fruit of a new immortality’ – i.e. by tasting physical death herself, she would deliver a never-ending generation of men and women and thus transmute herself as an immortal fount of life. The serpent cajoles the sentiment of the fairer sex by describing her as capable of a higher plane of sexual mysticism in so far as, in her, the speaker foresees a triumph of femininity and its transcendence over the gist of mortal knowledge, of good and evil as experienced by Adam who is just another ‘naked animal hid in human dress’ (“What the Serpent Really Said” 22).

The poet’s exaltation of love as the life-force behind all creativity and the surveillance of spring in the lives of poets and artists since antiquity nowhere receive a better exposition as in the poem “Pervigilium Veneris”. Being gifted with mercurial gifts of Apollo, (the God associated more with Light and Intellect and less with the physicality or Earthly pleasures), the sensuality and passion of Aphrodite (the goddess of love, beauty, pleasure, passion and procreation), artists such as Pushkin, Byron, Goethe and Ronsard find their ablest expression in the highest form of beauty and authenticity symbolized by Zeus as the ‘avatar’ or incarnation in Greek pantheon. “Neither of their divine gifts was denied: / Assured by the rule that holds in love and war, / Apollo their source, Aphrodite their guide, / And Zeus their avatar.” (“Pervigilium Veneris” 21-24) The co-existence of both Classical and Christian myth in the poems discussed so far no doubt conforms to some primordial secularity of Hope’s poetics which very much like that of Yeats, seems to have chosen Homer as the idol in search of poetic truth.

Nevertheless, the function of myth in literature continues to engage critical speculations with regard to a basic question – does it peremptorily tend to valorize the past only or reserve some teleological import for the present and future as well? Hope’s blatant treatment of the erotic, his comic-ironic stance to experience and his biting satire (that often seems to jolt readers out of a sense of literary security), no doubt serves to add distinction to Hope’s use of myth. In fact, Hope’s treatment of myth in his poetry seems to validate to a certain extent, chiefly, the Sociological and also the Pedagogical aspects of myth as propounded by American mythologist Joseph Campbell and critic Mridusmita Mahanta has aptly mentioned the four basic functions of myth as per Campbell –

... the Mystical Function – experiencing the awe of the universe; the Cosmological Function – explaining the shape of the universe; the Sociological Function – supporting and validating a certain social order; and the Pedagogical function – how to live a human life-time under any

circumstances. [...]. Campbell's sociological function considers the role of myth as a 'personal mentor,' in that its stories provide a psychological road map for the finding oneself in the labyrinth of complex modern world. (Mahanta 2011: 36)

One has to reckon with the fact that myth has an intangible omnipresence with a tendency of manifesting itself tangible in man's everyday life in the form of rituals, dreams, customs, religious beliefs etc. In *The Function of Myth in Sickness and Health*, Thomas Mann thus righteously opines that the myth is an eternal truth in contrast to an empirical truth. He avers: "It does not matter in the slightest whether a man named Adam ever actually existed; the myth about him in the book of Genesis presents a picture of the birth and development of human moral consciousness, which is true for all people of all ages and religions."<sup>1</sup> In addition to these arguments, the reader gets confronted with many more authentic aspects of deliberation such as - in the nature of Adam and Eve, the whole humanity is represented both in its original goodness and later corruption.

Hope's use of myth gestures to the poet's discourse on the ambivalent nature of social values in the modern society. The simultaneous existence of good and evil in the society of man is implied in Hope's treatment of two characters – 'Cain' and 'Abel' - and critic Jalalul Haq, has aptly observed in this context: "... they are equally sharing in whatever cultural development is taking place here in - with the difference, however, that one is striving to do it for betterment of it, to save it, the other for the deterioration of it, to destroy it." (Haq 1964: 224)

A similar kind of dialectic is found in the poem "The Sacred Way" where the persona negotiates the contrary pulls between the traditional, heroic past occupying his youth ("The world I grew up in now belongs to the past" 5) and the unedifying present of the modern world the self-immolating proclivity of which (as per the poet's vision), threatens the nuclear innocence in the progeny so as to deter its search for the cultural roots or heritage or, so to say, the 'sacred way' of life to follow: "We have lost that world. How shall my son go on / To form his archetypal image of man? / Frankenstein? Faust? Dracula? Don Juan? / O Absalom, my son!" (13-16). The Biblical parallel of David-Absalom no doubt adds poignancy to Hope's use of myth in diagnosing the malaise of the present.

His incorporation of myths and legends pleads for a re-interpretation, re-structuring and re-moulding of the baffling experience of 'deadened present' to provide appropriate symbols for expressing a meaningful impression with the suggestion of a system of surviving values. For example in the poem "Australia", Hope's lament for lost cultural roots brings into consciousness the urge for some cataclysmic regeneration of the nation as implied in the mythic images such as the 'sphinx' and the 'stone lion' that seems to subscribe much to the Hindu religious myth of 'Narasinghavatar,' a demonic incarnation of Lord Vishnu. The symbolic affinity between the Sphinx and Vishnu; Zeus and Indra, the king of gods in Hindu pantheon (as suggested by the term 'avatar' in the poem "Pervigilium Veneris"),

unmistakably points to some Indic influence in Hope's poetry manifested in his correlating of the harrowing present with a halcyon past. Amodini Sreedharan has made a pertinent comment on the transcendent element in Hope's poetic treatment of mythology: "He is a citizen not merely of the world but of the earth" (Sreedharan 2006: 267).

The overall tenor of the poetry of North East also articulates an urge for reclaiming the lost identity, the lost Elysium of peace amidst the cacophony of traumatic experience of exile, terror and migration. A recurrent telescoping of the happy past and a tensed present beckons the haze of an uncertain future where the perception of a vague fear in the form of apparitions and ghosts often plague the poet as in the piece entitled "Volcano You Cannot Erupt" by Manipuri poet Thangjam Ibopishak: "... Volcano... you cannot erupt / Volcano, stay asleep... / Lava remain slumbering..." (1-5).

When Temsula Ao speaks lyrically in her poem "Stone-People From Lungterok", the past as history appears in a state of animated suspension or suspended animation:

Lungterok,  
The six stones  
Where the progenitors  
And forebears  
Of the stone-people  
Were born  
Out of the womb  
Of the earth. (1-8)

According to the Aos, their forefathers emerged out of the earth from a place named Lungterok, comprising of six people – three men and three women. The poet explicates a wonderful image of her ancestors as individuals who were gifted with not only special skills for survival, but also some rare qualities such as – an insight into the mystique of nature; in the conjunction of the natural and the supernatural perceived in the scenario of all living forms; and most of all, they possessed a prophetic urge to communicate the gist of their experiences for illumining the lives of their progeny. In the poet's vision, their lives testify to a happy synthesis of antinomies such as the 'the savage and the sage', 'the poetic and the politic' and 'the barbaric and the balladic.' The transcendent knowledge inbred in the ancestors (recognized as 'Greater bards'), is acknowledged in the following excerpt from Ao's another poem "Songs Dedicatory" which states that the song of the poet is the articulation of those primordial feelings and emotions perceived and transmitted through generations: "... now vibrate / for a kindred heart / who knew and understood / long before I knew them." (32-35)

The poetic allegiance to indigenous cultural roots can also be traced in poems like "History and Heritage." The former seeks to reconstitute the saga of evolution

of a community (“the lore / Of our essential core” 12-13) through the re-evaluation of folklores in the form of songs which with a life of their own like seeds, germinate into blossoms in the form of winged words, i.e. poetry. In the latter, the poet hurls a dig at the modern commoditisation and fetishisation of indigenous art and culture forms, the biased urge for ‘representation’ of which repudiates the original artistic authenticity of experiences behind such creations: “They languish, these uprooted / treasures of my heritage / caged within imposing structures / in designated spaces.” (“Heritage” 1-4) [*Shankhyan* para 10]

A similar kind of sentiment is rehearsed in another poem “Prayer of a Monolith” which in the form of soliloquy of a stone beautifully articulates the trauma of being weaned from its natural habitat including the separation from a soul-mate (“My beloved of the laughing dimple/ Standing by my side” 5-6) for the purpose of man’s commoditisation of culture for his self-interest: “As I stood in my shame / For someone else’s fame. / Thus I stand now at the village gate / In mockery of my former state.” (43-46) But the glimpse of the past often leads to an epiphany of a beatific space of ideal existence without the least stint of sufferings in the form of ‘sorrow’ or ‘blood.’ The following excerpt from Robin Ngangom’s poem “Hill” is relevant in this context:

You have been carved by time as I am.  
From your forests grow flutes oracular drums and nymphs.  
The ancient ones still speak of the time  
when the gods, tired of the heavens  
descended to earth,.... . (5-10).

A gnawing concern for contemporary ecocide breeds social and political tensions of North East with mainstream society. For Temsula Ao, storytelling is a powerful weapon of subversion, of protest, representing the power of man in shaping reality through language. In the poem “The Old Story Teller”, the agency of storytelling offers the possibility of change with an acknowledgement of ‘racial responsibility’ in the urge for ‘perpetuating the existential history and essential tradition’ in the posterity and thus providing the world of readers a rich storehouse of North-Eastern folk-lore.

So I told stories  
As my racial responsibility  
To instill in the young  
The art of perpetuating  
Existential history and essential tradition  
To be passed on to the next generation. (33-38)

Language becomes a metaphor for potential change. Stories within the fabric of northeastern folklore provide the theoretical framework of their writing. A note appended to the poem explains the origin of the Oral Tradition of the Ao-Naga

community. It maintains that in ancient times, the tribe possessed a script which was displayed on a hide for everyone to read and learn. However, a dog one day accidentally swallowed the hide and so the script was lost forever. Since then, the people have retained every aspect of their lives through the Oral Tradition.

Narasingaram Jayashree has rightly pointed out that Ao's poetry or the poetry of North-east in general is rich in Ecocriticism, a term which as the name suggests, prioritises nature- centric concerns in poets and artists over the human-centric, or anthropocentric norms of values and in the critical praxis attached to the poetry of the North-east, nature or ecosphere as a Being, is valorized as the preserver, as the procrustean bed of all living organisms. The following extract from the poem "The Old Storyteller" vents the speaker's pride that her grandparents were in perfect harmony, tranquility and coherence with nature: "... the various animals / Who were once our brothers / Until we invented human language / And began calling them savage." (23-26) Ao aptly charts out the rustic professions of these stone people- they were potters, weavers, planters, growers, hunters, carvers and made merry by rendering songs.

The poem makes reference to the traditional myths about creation of the tribe and commonality of humans and animals. However, the tone turns apprehensive toward the end of the poem as the poet laments the new generation's disbelief in the cultural history of the tribe: "The rejection from my own / Has stemmed the flow / And the stories seem to regress / Into unreachable recesses." (47-50)

However, despite the despair of witnessing her tradition fade, the poet perseveres in resurrecting her legacy through her poetry. The poem itself becomes a culture – text in the persona's search for a rooted identity and validates, as pointed out by Neeraj Sakhyan et al., the critical comment of Jorn Rusen: "Identity is a matter of culture. Culture is the entire achievement of the human mind in interpreting and understanding the given world including oneself as living in this world and being a part of it" (Reusen 2004: 144).

The agony for the lost Elysium in a time lacerated by the culture of dominance receives a fine evocation in the poem "My Hills" where the poet laments the loss of peace and verdure in her region. She reflects upon a sense of alienation that haunts her in the present and breeds a longing for the bygone days. The poet draws on natural imagery to depict the once paradise-like state that prevailed in the region marked by lines such as - "and happy gurgling brooks" (6), "the seasons playing magic / On their many-splendored sheen" (11- 12) and "the hills echoed / with the wistful whispers / Of autumnal leaves." (14-16). However, the last three paragraphs bemoan the plight of this region, which having lost the serenity of the yesteryears, has become synonymous with political turmoil and social unrest. The trauma of experiencing how the familiar world dwindles into a haze of some uncouth fear and uncertainty is tellingly captured in the following excerpt:

But to-day  
 I no longer know my hills,  
 The birdsong is gone,  
 Replaced by the staccato  
 Of sophisticated weaponry. ("My Hills" 19-23)

Subir Bhaumik has diagnosed with much justification, the nature of violence in North-East India: "The North East has been seen as the problem child since the very inception of the Indian Republic. It has also been South Asia's most enduring theatre of separatist guerrilla war, a region where armed action has usually been the first, rather than the last, option of political protest." (Bhaumik 2009: xiv)

In her short story collection *These Hills Called Home*, Temsula Ao offers a moving scenario of the human drama that unfolds on the turbulent terrains of Nagaland which as a space, is racked with political disharmony rather than being a locale of solitary or insular incidents. In a poignant story titled "The Last Song", the nature of violence and atrocities perpetrated against women is studied in a claustrophobic state of law and order in Nagaland and the issue gets further manipulated by changes in both private and public aspects, the personal and the political aspects of the gendered question – viz, the subservient status designated to the women folk in the community and the much controversial amulet provided to the Indian army in the name of AFSPA. The poet's ambivalent attitude to the issue of Naga militancy problematises the question of nationalism and in the imbroglio of such active and divergent forces, the status of women testifies to a fall from primeaval peace and their predicament rather corresponds to the mythical state of *Trishanku*<sup>2</sup>, which means a space somewhere stranded in between heaven and earth thus gesturing to some 'nowhereness' of belonging. Similarly in the works of poets like Chandrakanta Mura Singh, one comes across discourses on dream visions and primitive vitality in the form of love overcast by a strong mythical suggestiveness as offered in the expressions such as "golden deer" and a "broken heart" ("The Stone Speaks in the Forest").

In short, the poets of the North East like Temsula Ao assume a problematic stance to disquieting experiences in the form of an ambivalence in attitude and a love for nature which with its paraphernalia of mythic rivers and magic hills with their ravines and deep gorges, permeates the poetic heart with a peace that manages to transmute the chaotic into a curative deliberation that seeks to fuse all disparate strands of experience such as the private and the public, hope and despair into an organic whole of lyrical utterance. Taken overall, the conscious use of myth as a literary strategy by Indian English writers lends an added dimension and depth to human experience and in a way, subscribes to the emancipatory character of artistic search that corresponds much to Alex Aronson's transcendental opinion of Indian civilization: "In any case, in a world of perpetual motion, India remains a perpetual becoming, a vast and protean sea of human improvisations on the great dance of time."<sup>3</sup>

In this way, it is through the practice of oral storytelling, myths have ever been used in literature both as archetype as well as structure so as to create a cultural contemporaneity of human experience by situating man in a larger continuum of time and space. If for Hope, it is the Christian myth or the Classical and Indian myth that provides, in an overt or oblique way, the stereotypes for modern day experience, in the case of a writer like Ao, it is mainly nature myth (reminiscent much of the Wordsworthian water-wraith) that permeates the mystic scenario which comprising hills, rivers and gorges, collectively suggest a recuperative, mythopoeic influence upon the real life experience of fear and violence.

Speaking generally, a subterranean perception of myth as a formative influence on the artistic psyche has motivated the representational urge for literary production over the ages and the distinctive voices of writers located across the barriers of time and topography, such as A. D. Hope of Australia or Tamsula Ao of North East India, only sound as tonal variations of expressions telling how the present gets radiated into a wider spectrum by the livid flames of a remote past. What seems to be important is to adjust the angle of vision for a glimpse of the twinkling stars of last night buried in the depth of the glaring daylight, to imagine sweet and sour!

### Notes:

1. Cited in Witenberg, *Interpersonal Explorations in Psychoanalysis*, p. 335.
2. The story of Trishanku is told in the “Bala Kanda” portion of the *Valmiki Ramayana*. Trishanku, the son of Prithu was a king in the Solar Dynasty, the dynasty of the great Hindu God Rama. Trishanku wished to ascend to heaven in his mortal body and after many intriguing schemes among the Rishis (sages), he was accommodated in a new, make-shift beatific space like the heaven with his head upside down. Theoretically speaking, the term denotes in postcolonial literary parlance, the sense of rootlessness in one’s search for identity.
3. Quoted in K. C. Baral, “Imaging India: Nation and Narration” (p. 80).

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## Representation of Women in Ama Ata Aidoo's Selected Literary Works: A Feminist Study

Rimpi Sonowal\*

### Abstract

The term 'feminism' basically stands for the rights and equality of women. There is no definite definition of feminism. The feminist thinkers struggled a lot for making the simple and innocent women of the society aware about this and they always are trying to solve several issues related to women. It is again not a recent concept. Feminists like Mary Wollstonecraft, Margaret Fuller, Virginia Woolf and many more thinkers forwarded a lot of different perspectives related to feminism. Ama Ata Aidoo, the former Education Minister of Ghana and an excellent academician has fought for the rights of the women of her native land. During her reign several provisions for Girls' Education were implemented in Ghana. She has a great contribution towards the literary field. In the present paper three of her popular literary pieces are taken into account to study the issues related to women of Africa especially of Ghana. These three literary works are: *Anowa* (1970), *Our Sister Killjoy or Reflections from a Black-Eyed Squint* (1977) and *Changes: A Love Story* (1991). These three literary pieces deal with women issue from different perspectives. She is also featuring her protagonists accordingly, Anowa, Sissie and Esi are different from each other. Her protagonists seem to be very bold, independent which reveal the strength of women.

**Keywords:** Ama Ata Aidoo, Feminism, Woman, Anowa, Sissie, Esi, Ghana

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### Introduction

Literature is said to be the mirror of society. It is like a document of social life, attitudes and perceptions of a particular society during a particular period of time. The emerging role of women in a family as well as a society can also be observed

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in literature, which the term 'evolution of women' better indicates. Literature acts as a medium to witness the evolution of women through years.

If we see the history regarding evolution of women in literature then we must acknowledge feminists like Mary Wollstonecraft, John Stuart Mill, Virginia Woolf, Margaret Fuller, etc. for their bold statements regarding the status of women in the global society. Likewise, surviving in a patriarchal society, African women had to wait for decades to gain a respectful position or to secure an identity in the society. Ama Ata Aidoo, an academican and former Education Minister of Ghana is one of those African thinkers who have been raising their voices in favour of educating as well as making the woman independent in Africa.

## **Aims and Objectives**

The present paper is based on the following aims and objectives:

1. To know about the status of women in African society through the selected literary works.
2. To explore the transformation of African women from their earlier position.

## **Analysis**

Various theorists have forwarded various opinions regarding the concept of feminism. Basically all of them talk about the need of equal position for women in the society along with male. In Africa also the influence of feminism among the females is found. The feminist thinkers have struggled a lot to help the women to get rid of several oppressive obstacles. They also try their best to educate the women so that they can stand for themselves in every aspect like- academic, economic, political and social. At the initial stage of consciousness regarding feminism, many women organizations developed in Ghana and when a meeting was held among women of 110 districts they realized the similarities and dissimilarities among them. After mutual understanding among them they came to a solution and prepared a political statement demanding rights and equality to the government of Ghana in 2004 and this is known as the Women's Manifesto for Ghana. According to the Manifesto, African women are:

Concerned about the negative impacts of economic globalization on Ghana and other African countries; unhappy about the continuing economic decline, rising levels of poverty, aid dependency and foreign domination of economic decision-making after two decades of structural adjustment programmes in Africa; horrified by the scourge of conflicts, wars, disease and famine across Africa and the West African sub-region in particular, and growing threat of militarization and intolerance over the world; appalled by the conditions of extreme poverty and hardship, deprivation and exclusion of rural and urban poor, the majority of whom are women . . .; concerned about the failure of the Ghanaian State to honour its obligations under the 1992 constitution, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of

Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and its commitment under Declaration and Platform for Action and its Outcome Document (Beijing + 5) and other international instruments to promote gender equality, with the result that decades of efforts at achieving gender equality and equality have yielded very little... (*The Women's Manifesto for Ghana* 8-9).

The above quoted lines show how the women of Ghana have struggled not only for their rights but also for the overall development of the country. Though they have faced a lot of problems in the patriarchal society, later on they came up with the solution which is beneficial for every citizen. They have not restrained themselves within the economic and political field rather they have also contributed in the field of literature and education for better development of the whole country. Naomi Nkealah describes the concept, African feminism “strives to create a new, liberal, productive and self-reliant African woman within the heterogeneous cultures of Africa. Feminisms in Africa, ultimately, aim at modifying culture as it affects women in different societies.” (133-141).

Ama Ata Aidoo is also one of the feminists of Africa. She has attempted to make people understand the need of equality in society through her unique narratives. She always tries to keep balance with the tradition and modernity. Her selected literary pieces accordingly, *Anowa* (1970), *Our Sister Killjoy or Reflections from a Black-Eyed Squint* (1977) and *Changes: A Love Story* (1991) represent different personalities of women especially of Africa. In these three works the protagonists represent the advancement of African women in three major aspects i.e. family, education and economic aspect.

In the play *Anowa* (1970), Aidoo presents the protagonist Anowa as a very brave girl who hardly listens to what her elders say. Since her childhood, she ignores one after another social as well as family rules and for this she becomes a common topic for discussion in society. Aidoo presents this character as an independent girl who loves to do activities of her choice, for example, playing with boys, roaming here and there in the village without doing any household activities and many more. A character of the play named OLD MAN describes Anowa's character in the following ways:

OLD MAN.

A child of several incarnations,  
She listens to her own tales,  
Laughs at her own jokes and  
Follows her own advice (Aidoo, *Anowa* 102).

The above extract refers to the nature of Anowa. She is such type of girl who always remains busy with herself. In African society, girls are basically expected to concentrate on household activities and the girls usually marry with the particular person whom her elders have selected for her. But Anowa is completely opposite

to all this. She marries a person of her own choice and maintains her married life with love and respect till her last breath. In fact, she also helps her husband in his business and approaches him continuously to marry another woman as she believes that because of her physical problem she is unable to bear any child though it does not happen because of her inability to bear.

This play basically talks about the major domestic issue in the society, i.e. marriage and family. Shashi Deshpande has also discussed about marriage in her popular novel, *The Binding Vine*: "Tell me, is getting married so important to a woman? ... One always hopes one's children will get more out of life than one has... Security. You're safe from other men...it usually gives them that guarantee of safety. It takes much greater courage to dispense with a man's protection" (87-88). Here Deshpande questions the society about the typical concept of marriage and its restrictive and oppressive nature towards the female. In relation to this issue, Pramod K. Nayar has commented on Ama Ata Aidoo's play *Anowa* as follows:

More complicated issues are addressed in Ghanaian writer Ama Ata Aidoo's play *Anowa* (1970). Here a disobedient daughter, Anowa, refuses all the suitors brought by her mother and marries a stranger, who, it turns out, is the devil. The independence of the young woman-a code for 'new' Ghana, perhaps?- is complicated by the need to adhere to the received wisdom of elders in the play. She finally commits suicide, a problematic ending because Aidoo seems to shy away from confronting the issues around women's 'rebellion' in patriarchal postcolonial societies (Nayar 133).

Nayar here talks about the play *Anowa* from both positive and negative perspectives of the need of flexibility in case of restrictions existing in the society. According to him, though Aidoo has thrown light on the concept of new Ghana by featuring her protagonist as strong but at the same time towards the end of the play we find the protagonist, Anowa facing a lot of problems in her married life which ultimately is the outcome of her own decision.

Aidoo presents this character as a bold, independent female which represents the strong repressed mind that every woman basically carries within her and often hesitates to show it to others. This fact also shows the development of the status of women in family life where they can give their opinions in family matters. Through this character Aidoo also tries to make the global reader understand that women are also mature enough to take decision about their future. In this play it is also reflected that girls are basically bound to marry with the person of their parents' or elders' choice in Ghana. The bride's opinion is not given any importance. Aidoo, thus presents her protagonist complete opposite to such typical thought of the society which may make people think beyond their typical thought. In other words this play basically reflects to that dark side of the reality where women hesitate to give their opinions.

pursuing higher education. Breaking the typical notion of staying within the four walls of the house, Sissie represents the modern grown up African woman who steps out from her country all alone and experiences a lot of things about people in foreign land. On her journey she also comes across her fellow people who have also stepped out from their native land for a better life. She feels pity after seeing the hard situations that her fellow countrymen are going through in the foreign land. She has mentioned several instances describing the pathetic condition of her fellow countrymen. The following sentences are an extract from the text:

The women especially were pitiful. She saw women who at home would have been dignified matrons as well as young, attractive girls looking ridiculous in a motley of fabrics and colours. Unused to the cold and thoroughly inefficient at dealing with it, they smothered their bodies in raiments of diverse lengths, hues and quality- in a desperate effort to keep warm (Aidoo, *Our Sister Killjoy* 88).

From the above quoted lines it is revealed that people struggle a lot in the foreign land. Women sacrifice their comfort and needs in order to give their family a better life. From her journey, Sissie also comes across a bitter truth that people often neglect their native land after heading to a foreign land. Sissie stands opposite to such trend and she proudly returns to her native after completing her work. With this she attempts to pass a message that we all have a responsibility towards our motherland which we should never forget.

Through the protagonist Sissie, Aidoo attempts to set an example of a responsible citizen and this novel is said to be her semi-autobiographical one. Sissie is never found hesitated in the foreign land in showing her African identity rather she seems to be a proud educated woman. Aidoo wants to teach her own people to love their native land and how a woman can also prosper in the field of knowledge by maintaining all the decorum of her origin. In fact the novel ends with Sissie's return to her native land with more responsibility towards it. During her journey Sissie experiences several sweet and bitter experiences and she is represented like a bird through whose eyes the European land is described and a hint is given about the condition of the settled African people in the European land.

Similarly, in the novel *Changes: A Love story* (1991) we find the protagonist, Esi as an independent thinker who works in the Department of Urban Statistics. The society around Esi wants the woman to take care of the needs of her husband and child. The society also prefers the married couple to have more than a child. Oko, her husband becomes very much influenced by the expectation of the society and hence he begins to show his masculinity over Esi. The following instance will better serve the purpose:

...Oko flung the bed cloth away from him, sat up, pulled her down, and moved on her. Esi started to protest. But he went on doing what he had determined to do allmorning. He squeezed her breast repeatedly, thrust his

tongue into her mouth, forced her unwilling legs apart, entered her, plunging in and out of her, thrashing to the left, to the right, pounding and just pounding away. Then it was all over (Aidoo, *Changes*, 9).

The above lines are enough to understand the day to day sufferings of woman in the society where she hardly can express her desire. Again the parents do not want their daughters to become the second wife of a person. But Esi has challenged the typical society by divorcing her husband Oko and becoming the second wife of a person named, Ali. Because of her dedication towards her job, Esi is unable to pay attention to the household matters. This character also undergoes several difficult situations throughout the novel. But Esi stands brave and always is found ready to face every situation. Towards the end of the novel, Esi stays all alone as her second marriage also does not go smoothly but at that time also she is found a strong lady doing her activities by herself.

Like other two characters Anowa and Sissie, Esi is also a very strong character which reveals the mental strength of woman. Esi is in fact an economically independent lady who does not want to be a burden in anyone's life. These three protagonists of Ama Ata Aidoo have come out as struggling characters who have struggled a lot in their journey of life. Aidoo has represented her protagonists quite opposite to what the Caribbean poet Lorna Good is on has expressed in her poem entitled "I am Becoming My Mother". Some of the lines are mentioned below:

Yellow/ brown woman  
Fingers smelling always of onions  
My mother raises rare blooms  
And waters them with tea (qtd. Nayar 136).

The above quoted lines explain the basic identity that is entrusted with woman. It also explains the suitable activity of cooking with woman. The term 'yellow' and 'brown' refer to the two generations of woman i.e. grandmother and mother. This also reveals the adaptation or transformation of duties and responsibilities from a generation of woman to another generation of woman. But in the novel, Aidoo has transformed the typical notion of housewife to a professional woman through the character of Esi.

## Conclusion

Ama Ata Aidoo is quite different in her explanation from her contemporaries. Her protagonists serve her repressed desire. Aidoo wants the woman of her nation to be bold, independent enough to survive in the society with respect and put forward their own opinions in the matters. Through these three strong characters, Aidoo wants to set before her native women an example regarding how they can overcome their depressions, tensions, difficulties. Sissie's heading towards abroad for further education and again returning towards her own native land by not forgetting her duty and responsibility towards her mother land; Anowa's decision to marry the boy

of her own choice and continuing her married life despite facing several ups and down in the life; and Esi's driving the car, arguing with the taxi-drivers verbally, working efficiently in the Department of Urban Statistics, after getting divorced with her husband marrying another married person and facing all the discomforts bravely; all these matters though seem to be very small but rather the most important points that we often negotiate with. All these three literary works basically concentrate on the concept of new Ghana where woman will enjoy equal facility along with man by keeping balance with their tradition.

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## When the Subaltern Speaks: A Study of Mahasweta Devi's "Kunti and the nishadin"

Nandini C. Sen\*

### Abstract

Mahasweta Devi's short story "Kunti and the nishadin" revolves around an imagined conversation between the Empress and a woman from the hunter-gatherer nomadic tribe, a woman of no significance to the rulers of the land. Kunti, the Queen Mother considers the nishadin to be akin to rocks and stones in the forest where she now dwells, who is unworthy of her attention or disdain. The conversation concentrates on the power structures of patriarchy which shape the *Rajdharm* or the polity of governance. The patriarchal take on parenthood, kingship and the evolution of power structures is integral to Mahasweta's retelling of the epic through this short story. It is a modern-day parable which questions the dominant power structures built on the edifice of religion. Mahasweta offers a gendered critique while also showing how patriarchy is internalised and perpetrated through marriage, kingship and succession.

This paper discusses the story as a contemporary postcolonial fable where the subaltern not only speaks but also dares to challenge the mores of the society by creating her own justice system which is in tandem with the natural laws of the society.

**Keywords:** Patriarchy, Gender, Religion, Subaltern, Mahasweta Devi

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Mahasweta Devi's "Kunti and nishadin" has been translated from the original Bengali story titled "Kunti o nishadi" by Anjum Katyal in a volume titled *After Kurukshetra* (2005). Talking about the translation Katyal writes,

With the ancient epic *Mahabharat* as her source, and the battle of Kurukshetra as the central motif, Mahasweta Devi weaves three stories in which we visit unexpected alleys and by lanes of the traditional epic saga,

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and look at the events from the eyes of women – marginalised, dispossessed, dalit. Their eyes condemn the wanton waste and inhumanity of war. This Kurukshetra is not the legendary Dharmayuddha of the popular imagination but rather a cold-blooded power game sacrificing countless human lives. (After *Kurukshetra*, Blurp)

“Kunti and nishadin” is the second story in the volume where the focus is on the Queen mother Kunti who has proceeded to the forest as part of the *vanaprastha* (renunciation of worldly life) along with Dhritarashtra and Gandhari. The story throws up multiple questions regarding female sexuality, motherhood and the hypocrisy surrounding childbirth and lineage in the royal households. The two women at the centre of the discourse are the royal matriarch Kunti and the nameless woman from a nomadic tribe – the nishadin.

Kunti, the royal matriarch is the mother of the five Pandav brothers who are known for their adherence to *dharma* (religion) and are celebrated for wiping out the haughty Kauravas and bringing back the rule of law to Indraprastha. Kunti is defined by her glorious widowhood and motherhood but alone in the forest, divested of her royal duties, she finally sits back and reflects on her life. She can finally shed tears for the son she was ashamed to call her own. Her self-questioning brings to fore the rigid stereotypes and hypocrisies of the royals which have defined her life till date. Away from the palace and her queenly duties, Kunti is finally able to pause and question the hollowness of her existence.

Kunti can now look back. She never knew she carried within her such a burden of unspoken thought and feelings. Life in the *rajavritta* was so different. Mother of the Pandavas. Wife of Pandu. The role of daughter in law, the role of queen, the role of mother, playing these hundreds of roles where was the space, the time to be her true self? All the while – amazingly – she never felt anything was hers and hers alone. (After *Kurukshetra* 22)

The only time Kunti had ever acted of her own free will was when she had called upon the sun god which had resulted in the birth of her firstborn Karna. Yet, Kunti had forsaken him at birth and had never had the courage to claim him as her own. As she pours her heart out in the thick of the forest, she starts to feel lighter. She realises now that she had not only wronged Karna, she had also wronged the woman in her – a woman who had dared to love. As life ebbs away from her, she seeks atonement for her sins. The gravest sin which she remembers committing lies in her inability to claim her firstborn as her own as he had been born before she tied the knot with Pandu. Worried about the social stigma attached to an unwed mother, Kunti had placed the newborn in a basket and allowed it to sail away. Much later in her life she wanted to meet her son but had refused to recognise him fearing a scandal. She had allowed him to grow up and live his life in ignominy chided for being a charioteer’s son, mocked and chastised by the royals. Young Karna had continued to suffer in silence when Kunti finally chose to reveal his identity to him not out of love but for the fear of Karna’s wrath against the Pandavas. In the battle

that followed between Arjun and Karna, the latter was treacherously killed and all along his sole fault had been the tragedy of his birth which denied him Kshatriyahood and a royal existence. The Karna story points to a grievous fault in the society based on caste and the politics of birth but seen through Kunti's repentant eyes it brings to life the complexities of the patriarchal world where the woman is perceived merely as a vessel for perpetrating the dynasty - devoid of agency and existing merely as an appendage of her male counterpart. In Mahasweta's story, the patriarchal domination and hypocrisy is more visible in the royal quarters as opposed to that of the commoners. In the world of the nishads, it is nature which determines their course of action. They are seen to be more grounded, connected to mother earth, and their lives - easy and cohesive unlike the royal family which thrives on hypocrisy.

Burdened by age and the weight of a life misspent, Kunti seeks refuge in the forest where she chooses to unburden herself by talking about the sins committed by her. Her heart feels lighter as she converses with the trees and stones even as she imagines her worries diminishing. Far from the world of the *rajavritta*, Kunti seems to have found solace at last. It is at this point of time that she is joined by a nishadin who does not speak but seems to soak in everything Kunti is saying. Kunti continues to talk, allowing her cares to be spoken out loud just for once in her life, totally convinced that the nishadin does not speak or understand her language thereby successfully obliterating her presence and treating her like one of the lifeless stones in the forest – a classic postcolonial situation of erasure and obliteration. In the queer patriarchal space in which Kunti operates, a woman may beget children through other men if her father or husband mandates it and these children would be part of the lineage and carry forth their patronym even though they might not have been sired by the man himself. Questioning the tenets of patriarchy which has enslaved her throughout her life, she says:

No, I never even thought of doing anything of my own. Pandu told me a woman can beget sons with the aid of another man. I got my lord's permission. I went ahead. The only time I took a man I wanted of my own free will, I got Karna. I was unmarried then. In today's society, Yudhisthira, if her husband should wish it, a woman can beget a child sired by another. But no young girl can become a mother of her own free will. Madhavi, the rishi's daughter, on her father's command, bore four sons sired by four different men. She was unmarried. But she was carrying out her father's orders, so society accepted her. (*After Kurukshetra* 33)

Kunti realises at the very end of her life that she has never known a time when she could make her own choices. Her sexuality is curbed but her womb is held sacred as she provides the heirs of Pandu since it was the duty of a Kshatriya woman to provide an heir to the husband. Much to her dismay, she realises that the only man she had taken as her lover and the son begotten through this union was lost to her forever. According to Arunabha Bose,

The polyphony and heterogeneity of female voices in Mahasweta's story displace the omniscient narrative voice of Vyasa while recuperating the 'woman' Kunti who was contained in the self-reflecting representations of Kshatriyahood. Mahasweta delegitimises the patrilineality of the male kinship structures in the *Mahabharata* to show how 'Dharma' rationalises the Kshatriya state's prohibitions and regulations upon female sexuality through the polyvalence of power entrenched in structures of fatherhood, family formation and dynastic propagation. (Bose 5)

As Kunti laments the death of Karna whom she had been forced to forsake at birth, her confession is heard by a group of nishadins. Kunti is initially scared of them wondering if any harm will come her way but she soon obliterates them from her consciousness as in consequential.

Earlier, my eyes could not see, my mind could not understand.

But I have lashed my conscience over and over. And I have realized. If I do not speak now, it will be the ultimate sin.

Suddenly Kunti lifted her head. Stone-faced, unmoving the nishadins were staring at her.

Kunti was speechless.

The elderly nishadin said something to the others, who knows what. They fell over each other laughing.

Kunti was trembling, terrified. Would they come closer?

Their shadows may fall on the sacred pile and defile it.

Evening was approaching. Kunti stood up. Her thin fingers tightened on the grass rope as she dragged the bundle away....

Talking before the nishadins was same as talking to the rocks and stones. To the earth. (*After Kurukshetra* 30)

For Kunti, the Empress, the nishadins are akin to rocks and stones: their language - unintelligible and their mannerisms childlike. The division of classes creates an impenetrable wall around Kunti's consciousness which does not allow her to look at the nishad community as fellow humans. This nomadic tribe with its unique ways continues to remain in the fringes of the mainstream social framework. Needless to say, Mahasweta uses these stories as an allegorical rendition of the present times where even today a nomadic tribe is looked upon with suspicion and scorn by the mainstream. According to Bill Ashcroft, language is a way in which "social, economic and political discourse are grounded....it is incontestable that language is the mode of a constant and pervasive extension of cultural dominance- through ideas, attitudes, histories and ways of seeing- that is central to imperial hegemony" (Ashcroft, et al. 22). By denying linguistic skills to the nishadin, Kunti falls into the trap of the hegemonic dominance where she being the ruler has access to language which a woman from a hunter gatherer tribe is supposed to lack. While she can expiate her

sorrows through words, her presumption is that this unlettered poor woman will not be able to understand what she is saying. Hence it takes her completely by surprise when the nishadin calls her by her name and speaks to her in the queen's own language. The nishadin's speech is akin to that of Caliban's who masters Prospero's language in order to be able to curse him.

In the idylls of the forest Kunti feels free to articulate her opinion on the 'dharmayuddha' that the war at Kurukshetra had come to be known as. The senseless loss of lives is justified by the royals as preordained. The pious Gandhari sees death as "nothing but an epic of sorrow." (*After Kurukshetra* 30) She consoles other grieving women by asking them to be courageous as now grief will be their sole companions. Kunti, however, questions this in the privacy of the forest where she is sure no one will be witness to her confessions. She questions the unfairness of the war which seemingly makes heroes of men who lay down their lives and attain martyrdom; but the real victims are the women who are forced to live as pale shadows of their former selves – cursed into a lifetime of mourning. Kunti seems to have grasped the true essence of the war as she says, "This war was a battle for power. A war to wipe out the other and to establish oneself as all powerful. Did dharma triumph? Was dharma vanquished? The heartrending cries of women at the sight of all those bloodied, savaged corpses were a curse on the word 'war' itself." (*After Kurukshetra* 28-29)

As Kunti unburdens herself, the nishad woman sits and watches her intently. Even as Kunti talks, she feels her sorrow lessen as she is finally able to confess to Mother Earth. But interestingly her confessions merely record her own sorrows rather than focussing on others that she or her sons may have harmed. Even in the confessional mode she continues to remain the self-serving queen and articulates the value systems of the *rajavritta* (the royals). This truth is brought home to her when the nishadin confronts her. The nishad woman continues to remain nameless as if she were speaking on behalf of all her tribe. She addresses Kunti as an equal and dares to tell her how money and hunger for power have blinded the royals and how the women who perpetrate the *rajavritta* thought are actually doing a great disservice to womanhood and nature. The nishadin reminds Kunti that nature abhors waste. A woman's life doesn't deserve to be sacrificed just because her husband is no more. "We don't deny the demands of life. If we are widowed, we have a right to remarry. Those who wish to can marry again." (*After Kurukshetra* 38) The nishadin then goes on to remind Kunti of her crime against *lokavritta* (the commoner) which unfortunately does not figure as a crime in the eyes of the queen. She reminds her of the *jatugriha* (house of lac) incident where Kunti had been an active participant in the murder of six innocent people. Duryodhana had planned to kill Kunti and her sons by burning them alive in a house constructed of lac in his bid to usurp their share of the kingdom but the Pandavas had gained intelligence of this plot. For a whole year the Pandavas had planned their escape. They had invited a nishad mother and her five sons and had plied them with drinks. They had then

made their escape after setting fire to the house. Duryodhana had been fooled seeing the six charred bodies in the house. The *jatugriha* incident is recounted as a feather in the Pandava cap as they had managed to foil the assassination attempt made on them by the vile Duryodhana and the loss of six nishad lives has been treated as inconsequential in the dominant discourse. Mahasweta dramatizes the story by putting the ball in the nishadin's court as she interrogates Kunti, who drunk with power, can- not even remember this as a crime in her book. The death of a nishad is too inconsequential to find mention in a queen's confessions. The nishadin who had been listening to Kunti's confessions, now turns on her demanding explanations and Kunti, for once, is rendered speechless – she is shocked into silence as she does not expect her to know her language. The royals who signify the mainstream discourse accord the Nishads, Sobors, Nagavanshis, etc. sub human status. In Mahasweta's story it is the marginalized nishad woman who questions the mighty Queen. She even pronounces the latter's death sentence and the Queen is forced to accept it with humility.

A scheme, right? A cruel plot? Only the *rajavritta* can do such a thing. You live there for one year, knowing full well that the place will be burnt to ashes, that you have to save yourself and your sons. You had to provide irrefutable proof that the six of you had been burnt to death. nishads and nishadins were regular visitors there, weren't they?

But...

Shut up. Listen. They (the nishads) would come from the forest. They supplied timber, animal hides, ivory, venison, medicinal herbs, resin honey. They both men and women would sell their wares in exchange for salt – clothes – rice. Then they would drink some wine, sing and dance arm in arm and return home...

Yes.

Tell me who knew of a certain elderly nishadin and her five young sons? Who invited them to her feast for brahmins? Who made sure that they were served with unlimited amounts of wine? You have held feasts for so many brahmans so many times Kunti. How often have you ever invited any nishad – kirat – sabar – nagavanshi forest tribals?... (After *Kurukshetra* 37)

She dismisses Kunti's plea for forgiveness by saying, "You couldn't even remember this sin. Causing six innocent forest tribals to be burnt to death to serve your own interests. That was not even a crime in your book. In our eyes, by the laws of Mother Nature, you, your sons, your allies are all held guilty." (After *Kurukshetra* 38)

The nishadin's punishment for Kunti is different from that of the *rajavritta*. Instead of resorting to the *rajavritta* way of "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" (38) the nishadin relies on Nature to take its toll. Having lived in forests all their

lives the nishad community knows and senses when a forest fire will break out. When the fire is imminent, they make their escape but not before the nishadin stops to tell Kunti that her end is near and she must atone for her sins. "Three blind, weak and infirm people cannot make it there. One is blind from birth, another has chosen to be blind, and you, you are the blindest of all three. You can murder innocents and forget all about it." (*After Kurukshetra* 39)

"Kunti and the nishadin" replaces the dominant male narrative of Vyasa by situating the text in the women's quarters. Seen from the women's point of view, the so called Dharmayuddha or just war is nothing but a sham to wrest political power. Kunti, the Rajmata, is glorified for her piety, wisdom and stoicism – all of which appear to be hollow and meaningless since all she had done was to propagate the patriarchal order of begetting heirs for the kingdom and standing on the margins watching the fratricidal war, unable to stop her own two sons from killing each other. At no point of time had she intervened or dared to go against the prescribed tenets of Royalty and Kshatriyahood. The only time she had sought audience with her first born was to barter a deal with him – by revealing his origins just before he went into war, Kunti ensured that she would have weakened him as part of a large conspiracy to see the Pandav brothers win.

Living in the *rajavritta* makes one cunning, treacherous. I never visited Karna hungering to hold him to my bosom. For my son's sake, I told him to leave Duryodhana, join Yudhisthira. Now I feel, Karna knew that the clever trickster Vasudev Krishna would ensure that the victory to the Pandavas. Only the war of the victorious is known as dharmayuddha. The wars of the vanquished are never called thus...(*After Kurukshetra* 32).

The *Janavritta*, however, works very differently from the *rajavritta* as the common woman is seen wielding greater power and agency than her royal sister in Mahasweta's works. The nishads live in great harmony with the forest, their balance of life determined by the nature. Also, there seems to be a greater harmony between men and women. Dismissing the Brahmanical order the nishadin says, "Oh, we see plenty of rishis about. This is the land of our birth you know. Devi Aranyaka is our mother." (36) Mocking at Kunti's piety and her singular regret of not being able to claim Karna as her own, the nishadin explains the difference between the tribal community (read *janavritta*) and the dominant patriarchal world order of the royals which is bolstered by Brahminical religion.

–The *rajvritta* folk and the *lokavritta* folk have different values, different ideas of right and wrong. If a young nishad girl makes love to the boy of her choice and gets pregnant, we celebrate it with a wedding.

– What kind of law is that?

– Nature's Law. Nature abhors waste. We honour life. When man and woman come together, they create a new life. But you won't understand. (*After Kurukshetra* 36)

## Conclusion

By positing an alternative to the dominant discourse of patriarchy where the subaltern not only speaks but avenges herself, Mahasweta posits a parallel world view which exists in the society but is ignored by the mainstream. She also wishes to right the wrong where the current governments in collaboration with the business houses are in the process of taking away the forest rights from the tribal communities and force them to assimilate or to die of penury. Mahasweta's voice resonates with the dispossessed as she articulates a sharp critique of the dominant political narrative of Brahminical supremacy and gendered inequality. In the words of the noted critic G. N. Devy who was a close associate of Mahasweta Devi, "Her writing addressed one single word: injustice, wherever she saw what she thought was injustice, she plunged into the struggle and never looked back." (Devy 89)

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## Predicament of the Marginalised in Select Short Stories of Mulk Raj Anand

Mohan Lal Mahto\*

### Abstract

Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao are known as the trio of Indo-Anglian fiction writers. Anand, senior among the three and committed to creative writing, is a prolific writer. His popular novels include *Untouchable*, *Coolie*, *Two Leaves and a Bud*, *The Sword and the Sickle*, etc. Besides, he has more than seven collections of short stories to his credit. A committed humanist, he presents the predicament of the deprived people of society not only in his novels but also in his short stories. The paper explores the depiction of the realistic picture of the deprived and the untouchable people in his short stories, who are subjected to perpetual pains and sufferings in our society, and his concerns and sympathy for such people. The short stories discussed in this study include “Old Bapu”, “The Barber’s Trade Union”, and “Lajwanti”.

**Keywords:** Discrimination, Inequality, Humanist, Predicament, Sympathy, Untouchables

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Mulk Raj Anand is a well-known Anglo-Anglian literary figure of India. He is a prolific writer whose novels and short stories have wide range of readers in India and abroad. Besides his acclaimed novels – *Untouchable* (1935), *Coolie* (1936), *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937), *The Village* (1939), *Across the Black Waters* (1940) and *The Sword and the Sickle*, he has published seven collections of short-stories. These are – *The Lost Child and Other Stories* (1934); *The Barber’s Trade Union and Other Stories* (1944); *The Tractor and the Corn Goddess and Other Stories* (1947); *Reflections on the Golden Bed and Other Stories* (1953); *The Power of Darkness and Other Stories* (1959); *Lajwanti and Other Stories* (1966); and *Between Tears and Laughter* (1973). He has also retold traditional Indian tales in his *Indian Fairy Tales* (1946) and *More Indian Fairy Tales* (1961).

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Born in Peshawar (now in Pakistan) in 1905, Anand is a man of wide learning and experience of India and Great Britain. His corpus of creative fiction attracts for deep study. The great scholar, K. R. S. Iyengar comments about Anand that he wrote “of the people, for the people and as a man of the people”. (333) M. K Naik remarks on the sensitive inclination of Anand, “The strength of Anand’s fiction lies in its vast range, its wealth of living characters, its ruthless realism, its deeply felt indignation at social wrongs, and its strong humanitarian compassion.” (160) Anand had close interaction with the people of the lowest strata of the society such as the children of the sweepers and other untouchables. When he was with his father, a Subedar in the regiment of Indian Army, he freely mixed with these children.

Anand explores pains and sufferings of the outcasts, peasants, sepoys, women and the working class, and their place in Indian society. He treads the realms which have not been given due attention by the Indian writers before him. He has undertaken the challenging task of depicting pariahs and boys from the bottom as prominent figures in his novels such as Bakha, an untouchable in *Untouchable*, Munoo, a waif in *Coolie*, and Gangu, an indentured labourer in *Two Leaves and a Bird*. This shows his commitment as a writer to speak for the unvoiced. These characters represent the strata of society where they are subjected to vicious circle of cruelty and exploitations. He depicts the social evils like poverty, untouchability, sati system, exploitations, repressions, etc. in his works. Simultaneously, he lambasts snobbery, hypocrisy, and fabrications of the privileged. He is the true voice of the marginalised, particularly the untouchables and those victimized by undeserved injustice from time immemorial. He believes that a great author highlights the cause of the dumb and the deprived.

Anand presents the realistic picture of the society not only in his novels but also in his short stories. His stories mirror the pathetic pictures of people who are treated as no less than animals and non-living things. This paper explores his concern exhibited for the deprived and untouchables in his stories titled “Old Bapu”, “The Barber’s Trade Union” and “Lajwanti”. These stories are highly acclaimed, and portray his social concerns regarding the subalterns. It is Anand’s humanitarian zeal for the dalits and the deprived that makes him the champion of the underdogs and crusader against social evils and man-made barriers which divide humanity and dehumanise people in unjust way. He deeply examines the social norms, traditions and practices that make the outcasts and women vulnerable creatures. He raises social and moral questions before the readers through his characters.

In his story “Old Bapu” Anand delineates the inhuman treatment meted out to an untouchable poor labourer at the hands of the privileged man. The story is set in the mid of 1930s. The protagonist of the story is a man called Old Bapu. He is about fifty, but looks seventy years old due to his malnutrition. Being orphaned at early age, he lives with his uncle Dandu Ram who later drives him out of his house. Dandu Ram considers him unfit for working in the field, so he disowns Old Bapu of his half bigha land and tortures him. The protagonist is called Old Bapu because of

his lean and thin body. He reveals that the boys call him 'Old Bapu' because "I am older than them..." (69). He discloses his anguish, too, "The caste Hindu urchins have no respect for the untouchables elders anyhow. And their fathers want to throw everyone of us into the garbage pit to use as manure for better harvest." (69) These words shed light on the humiliating attitude of the so called high caste people towards the low caste people.

Helpless and dejected in the society, Old Bapu makes a journey from his village named Shikopur to Gurgaon in search of a job. He hopes to find a job in road repairing works under a contractor named Sardar Ram Singh as he has worked under him earlier. After travelling seven miles, he reaches the destination and finds the contractor sitting in front of his house. But the unfortunate labourer has torturous experience. He cannot muster courage to speak to the contractor. Somehow with humility and folded hands he requests him for a job. Instead of any work or help, he receives reproach from the contractor. Ram Singh reacts, "Ohejaja Oldie! You can't work with that frame of yours! Doing half work for full pay...." (72). He uses derogatory term for Old Bapu and calls him, "a two legged donkey." (72) The contractor throws a coin before Old Bapu which he accepts with deep gratitude. Old Bapu is treated as if he were a beggar. Broken and despaired, he decides to return to his village. While returning home he stands before a shop and views his image in the mirror hung there. The shopkeeper shouts at Old Bapu, "Don't break my glass by showing it your ugly old face." (74) Again he experiences rebuke and humiliation.

In this caste ridden Indian society an untouchable is no less than a worm of a gutter. He is treated as dirt. Even older untouchable is humiliated by the younger born in high caste. Written after Independence, "Old Bapu" is a sincere social criticism. It also criticises the Indian government for its failure to provide employment to the poor and the unemployed. The casteist society unleashes atrocities on the poor and the low caste people without any practical reason.

Another story titled "The Barber's Trade Union" deals with the problem of caste system which has sacrificed innumerable people since ages at the altar of this biggest evil of Indian society. This story is about Chandu, the son of a barber, who is trained to follow the traditional profession of a barber in the village. He is dynamic, energetic and good at studies, but he has to discontinue his school and follow the traditional work after his father's death.

The narrator of the story, Chandu's fast friend, belongs to a high caste. So his mother dissuades him from keeping company with Chandu, Barber by caste, a low caste in the hierarchy of caste system. After accomplishing his professional work moving door to door in the village as a routine work, Chandu visits the town where he meets people of progressive ideas, and involves in healthy interactions with them. He believes in the equality of human beings. He is attracted to doctor Kalam Khan's attire and procures this type of dress with his hard earned money. One day he sets out for his daily routine work in the village wearing his new dress, a coat and

trousers and holding a leather bag in his hand. This new attire upsets the elder upper caste people of the village, and he is humiliated every step due to this new gesture.

First, he visits Bijay Chand, the landlord of the village where he becomes the target of reproach and humiliation. Chandu's new dress infuriates the landlord. As Chandu enters his house, he rudely shouts at Chandu, "...The son of pig! He is bringing a leather bag of cow hide into our house and a coat of marrow of, I don't know, I don't, I don't know some other animal, and those evil black Angrezi shoes. Get out! You will defile my religion..." (9) He orders Chandu, "Go away and wear cloths be fitting your low status as a barber... else I will have you flogged." (9) He uses abusive language for him. Although Chandu clarifies that it is an apparel of a doctor, the arrogant landlord has no patience to listen to his words. Chandu hears this and leaves the landlord's house without doing his work.

Secondly, he confronts with the village Sahukar who also exhibits the same prejudice. Sahukar comments, "You little swine, you go distinguishing yourself as a clown when you ought to be bearing your responsibilities and looking after your old mother.... Go and come back in your own cloths! Then I shall let you cut my hair" (10). Chandu cannot wear the cloths in the village due to the opposition of the upper caste people. Being born in a low caste, he is not supposed to wear such cloths. Discrimination based on caste is seen in the behaviour of Pandit Parmanand, too. He tells the narrator, an upper caste boy,

You boys have been spoiled by the school education which you have got. It may be all right for you to wear those things because you are going to be a leaned man, but what right has that low caste boy to such apparel? He has got touch our beard, our heads and our hands. He is defiled enough by God. You are a high a caste boy. And he is a low caste devil. He is a rouge! (10)

Chandu hears this, but does not yield. He revolts against the humiliation accorded to him. Instead of following the beaten path he stops rendering services to them in the village and opens a saloon in the town. Consequently, the upper caste men are forced to come to the saloon for shaving and hair cutting.

Chandu's rebellious activities take a large dimension. He undertakes a Herculean task to organise the other barbers of the district. Saving time from his work he moves across the district for organising the barbers, and after discussion and persuasion he unites them in his favour. Ultimately, the upper caste people of his village reconcile with Chandu. Thus he emerges as a union leader. He advocates for equality and identity of the downtrodden section of our society. The rigid pattern of the caste system in our society is revealed in this story.

In his famous short story "Lajwanti", Anand depicts the plight of another subaltern group- the poor women of our society. He is very particular about the women's problems of Indian society. In the Introduction to *Selected Short Stories: Mulk Raj Anand*, Saros Cowasjee aptly comments, "In Anand's works sympathies for

women have a special place as their suffering is the greater, owing to Hindu religion and tradition, and the strictures of a hide bound society” (Cawasjee xiv). Women are treated as commodity and they have no separate identity and existence.

This story is about a helpless rustic girl, Lajwanti born to a poor peasant. She is married to Balwant, the younger son of Chaudhary Ganga Ram, the village Sarpanch. Balwant is pursuing B. A. in a college in the city and wishes to get a job of a clerk. Jaswant, the elder brother of Balwant, is a married man who stays at home and works in agriculture. So his mother favours him. In absence of her husband, Lajwanti is reproached by her mother-in-law as well as brother-in-law. She suffers perpetual pains and humiliations in her husband’s house. Infatuated by Lajwanti’s beauty, Jaswant casts lustful eyes on her instead of safeguarding her chastity as she is his younger brother’s wife, a sister though not a genetically sister. He does not have any moral hesitation and cherishes licentious longings to satiate his lust. On the other hand, Lajwanti is a typical Indian woman who can never think of violating marriage vows. So she frustrates his lustful desires.

Lajwanti, named after a sensitive plant, is a woman of rebel who does not succumb to the lecherous demands of Jaswant. In order to free herself from the clutch of Jaswant, she escapes from her mother-in-law’s house and decides to go to her parents’ house. The journey is difficult. Walking bare foot in the scorching heat and covering ten miles, she somehow reaches Gurgaon and by catching a bus bound for Pataudi, she will reach her father’s house. Feeling thirsty she stops at a confectioner’s shop and drinks water. But unfortunately she is caught by Jaswant who is chasing her on a bicycle for ten miles. He asks her to come back to her husband’s home, but she declines.

A crowd gathers and simply watches it as a fun. Finding her arrogant, Jaswant kicks her with his right leg and slaps her in anger. Moreover, he crosses the limits of decency, abuses her and addresses her as a prostitute and a bad woman. He shouts, “Prostitute! Bad woman! Running away! The brother-in-law hit her with right foot. He slapped her on the head with loose right hand. And now a crowd of passers-by gathered to see the fun but no one intervened.” (93) Many people gather there but she sees no rays of hope as nobody comes forward to help her. Shrimati Sushila Devi, the engineer Dayal’s wife, while crossing by that way in their jeep, sees her in the crowd. Sensing something wrong, she asks her husband to stop the jeep. She brings both Jaswant and Lajwanti to her home, and listens to the things patiently. She asks Jaswant let Lajwanti go to her father’s home since she is not willing to go back to her in-laws’ house. She even becomes tough towards Jaswant when he tries to kick Lajwanti in her presence. Instantly, Sushila Devi slaps Jaswant and threatens him to hand over to the police if he tries to stop Lajwanti from going to her father’s house. Jaswant returns home without Lajwanti, filled with anger and humiliation that he has experienced in Dayal’s house. Ultimately, Shushila Devi rescues Lajwanti from Jaswant’s clutches and arranges a seat in a bus for her father’s home.

Lajwanti reaches her father's house. Unfortunately, Old Hari, her father, refuses to give her shelter. Instead, he reckons her coming to his house as an omen of disgrace. Champa, the midwife suggests Lajwanti to return to her husband's house at least for the sake of her mother's soul. She says, "If only for the sake of the soul of your dear mother, go hurry back. And come soon with your lap full of a child." (97)

Next day Hari Ram accompanies Lajwanti back to her husband's house. He makes apologies before her in-laws for the behaviour of his daughter. However, he is insulted and humiliated there. Jaswant takes revenge of the humiliation received at the hand of Shrimati Dayal. He kicks and abuses Lajwanti in presence of her father. Jaswant accuses her, "She has looked at more than one before her marriage.... She is a bad girl!....The way she insulted me when I went to fetch her back... She sat there answering back! And allowed that Afsar's wife to slap me on the face!.... Prostitute!" and "Jaswant kicked Lajwanti on her behind" (100). Even her mother-in-law accuses Lajwanti of looking at other men who pass on the road. Thus, she accuses her of moral turpitude. But Hari Ram constantly requests them to be merciful towards them and accept Lajwanti. He tells her in-laws, "I knew you would be merciful. And I now leave her in your care. Kill her if you like. But don't let her come to me without her lap full of son. I shall not be able to survive disgrace if she comes again" (100).

Hari Ram tries to pacify the situation with utmost humility and requests. He has brought a ring for Balwant. He submits, "I ...what shall I say, Choudhary, answered Hari Ram humbly, "I wish fate had made her not so good looking ... But now, I have brought her back. And you can kill her if she looks at another ... Here is a ring for my son Balwant. I could not give much dowry. Now I will make up a little for what boy did not get..." (102).

Lajwanti is angry at her father's cowardice action because he apologises before the people who are the culprits of her oppression and he leaves her in hell. He should have supported her cause. The writer presents her feelings in the following words, "And she was mad at her father for effacing himself and bowing before her in-laws. But tremors in her entrails ended in choking her throat. And the lofty flight anger only befogged her brain" (99). She wishes to revolt the repression but finds herself helpless.

Hari Ram teaches Lajwanti that a married woman's proper place is her husband's home and she should not bring any dishonour to him by leaving her husband's home again. She should come to father's house with a son in her lap. Thus she is again put in a cage subjected to perpetual persecutions. Hari Ram leaves Lajwanti to the mercy of her in-laws and Jaswant. Anand has poignantly portrayed the difficult and painful condition of Indian women prevalent in those days.

To end the vicious circle of tortures in her husband's house, one day at dusk she decides to commit suicide by jumping into a well. But she does not die as she knows

how to swim. The attempt to free from this hellish condition is abortive as she is seen by her mother-in-law, and is saved. Ultimately, she realises that she has doomed this life which she does not like. She tells herself, "There is no way for me .... I am condemned to live!" (102) In this story, Anand highlights how the Hindu traditions and customs are responsible for putting women in this situation.

Anand lambastes the rigid pattern of society where a woman becomes an agent of oppression of another woman because of some social taboos and beliefs. Jaswant dares cast lustful eyes on Lajwanti because of moral support from his mother who believes that Lajwanti should be mother of a child. She does not consider the fact that unless Balwant and Lajwanti live together she cannot achieve motherhood. As she is like her mother she should have borne in mind the situation of her daughter-in-law and also have listened to her grievances. She should have stopped Jaswant from abusing and physically torturing Lajwanti. Her oppressive behaviour also prompts Lajwanti to take fatal step of committing suicide.

Anand also depicts the humiliation and exploitation borne by dalit women in his famous novel *Untouchable*. Sohini, Bhakha's sister, an untouchable, is a shy, noble and beautiful young girl. She does the works of cleaning latrines and sweeping floors. Despite her meekness, she is humiliated and exploited because she is poor and dalit. Another woman in the novel Gulaboo scolds her, "Bitch, why don't you speak! Prostitute why don't you answer me?" (*Untouchable* 25). But she replies humbly, "Please don't abuse me .....I haven't said anything to you." (*Untouchable* 25). She also becomes a victim of molestation. Pandit Kali Nath calls her to clean lavatories in his courtyard and attempts to violate her chastity. Sohini opposes and screams. In order to save himself, Kali Nath comes out of the temple, blaming that she has defiled him by touching him, and gains sympathy of the crowd. On the other hand, Sohini is shocked at his behaviour. She prohibits her brother from taking revenge because people would not support them. Here Anand attacks the hypocrisy of the upper caste men who exploit untouchable women for sexual gratification, but the same women become untouchable otherwise.

Anand also focuses on the predicament of the marginalised women who are forced to work for livelihood in industries, and their miseries and agonies are ignored by this male dominated cruel society, and they become victims of male exploitation and neglect. Anand depicts the pathetic condition of Phalini, a working woman in his story "Lullaby", who loses her one year ailing child while working in the jute mill. He lambasts the society which is indifferent towards the agonies and miseries of poor women.

Lajwanti, Phalini and Sohini are the representatives of the marginalised women who are the victims of perennial oppression and humiliation in male dominated society. These marginalised women are treated mere as objects and are expected only to satiate the whims and desire of men. Similarly, Old Bapu and Chandu represent the under privileged society, subjected to everlasting humiliation and exploitation in the casteist society.

Anand, undoubtedly, is a true, faithful and selfless spokesperson of the unvoiced. He is a powerful critic of contemporary society. As an artist and humanitarian, he advocates for the amelioration of those who have suffered at the hands of their fellow beings for no fault save they are born in the depressed class. M. Berry writes that for Anand literature was “a weapon for attacking social, political and economic institutions injurious to human freedom and equal opportunity.” (27) Anand writes to Iyengar: “I am doing some village social work in order to integrate my love for the poor with actual work for them....I never realised, as intensely as I do now, the reasons why both Tolstoy and Gandhi chose the peasantry for their devotion. After writing for many years about pains of these people, I now feel that, for their sake, it may not all have been in vain.” (Iyengar 357)

The above discussion of some of his short stories reveals Anand’s compassion and concern for the down trodden and helpless people along with women. We also note his voices of protest as in our society poor people like Old Bapu, Dhanu, Lajwanti and Phalini are constantly subjected to pains, sufferings and humiliations. In his another story “Savitri”, he depicts how widows are forced to be burnt on the pyre with her dead husband. Savitri, in this story, is the victim of infamous practice of Sati System. The stories discussed above are sharp realistic studies of men and women crushed by overwhelming forces of our society. Anand declares, “I am conscious of the need to raise untouchables, peasants, the serfs, coolies and other suppressed members of society, to human dignity and self-awareness in view of abjectness, apathy and despair to which they have been condemned. (*Apology for Heroism* 137) Thus he establishes himself as a true humanist.

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## Affect, Embodiment and Artificial Intelligence in Spike Jonze's *Her*

Swapna Roy\*

### Abstract

This paper attempts to explore the relevance of affective phenomena in the genealogy of cultural and philosophical posthumanism. In its genealogical endeavour, this article expands the lens of posthuman by taking up Spinoza's notion of "affectio" and "affectus" from his *Ethics*. The paper would also argue how emotional competence makes AI more performative. Given that a new pathway for mental health has been opened up while emotions (on both sides) are activated, modulated, and exchanged to a biological and a nonbiological entity. The trajectory of this paper would take up social theorists and philosophers like Brian Massumi, Deleuze and Guattari to trace the affective phenomena in Spike Jonze's academy award-winning film *Her* (2013).

**Keywords:** Affectio and Affectus, Conatus, Kurzweil, Singularity, Artificial Intelligence

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### Introduction

Spike Jonze's *Her* (2013) is a science-fiction film with a futuristic setting in Los Angeles. The story projects Theodore Twombly (performed by Joaquin Phoenix), a letter writer by profession adding more colour from the palette of his feeling to the minute and heartfelt letters he has been assigned. Through technology, his dictation is "transcribed into a handwritten letter on blue stationery" (*Her* 01:30-46). Heartbroken, and disconnected in the world of connectedness, Theodore is in a complete state of discontinuity—living in the opaque memories of his married life, stuck in time, occasionally having a futuristic version of phone sex – having sex without an actual intimacy. Wrapped in the void – living inside a shell of folded memory – he is just like every other future man enshrouded with technological

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advancements. The touch of a real relationship, in this case, is an illusion, a mirage view multiplied by “*hyperreal*” existence while the city promises to give comfort and ease at every step to its citizens. Loneliness as a catalyst triggered to buy an OS1 demanding of having consciousness like a human being operating through its intuition (*Her* 10:27-40). Nevertheless, the question is, can human beings have an authentic relationship with an inhuman entity? Or, what about our emotional and psychological needs in this world of “*simulacra*”<sup>1</sup> where being affected is to be affected by “performativity”<sup>2</sup> and positionality.

## **To Be Human is to be Transhuman**

In the age of Singularity, our thoughts have been coded, electrified, and crossed the river of the sky with the pace of light. We are living not in an alternative world but in a “hyperreal” world – the reality is augmented, making us part of “*simulacra*” consciously or unconsciously. By extending the cognitive reach of our mind, the periphery of what is to be human is redefined: to be human is to be transhuman; the software of our biology has been reversed, rewired, and upgraded with technological evolution. Before we discuss humanism, knowing and understanding the very notion of humans is essential. In the closing paragraph of *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (1986), Foucault wrote about the historical appearances of the thing called “man”, “[t]hrough a mutation that is not of very recent origin, but which has still not come to an end, history has altered its position in relation to the document...” (5).

Humanism reflects upon our most sympathetic understanding and treatment of human nature. It treated the human as the locus of the universe influenced by his actions and thoughts. To have that awareness/consciousness of his/her self, the very essence of his existence and understand why s/he is also being treated as a sign of being human, is itself very crucial. Posthumanism has become an umbrella term referring to a variety of different movements and schools of thought, including philosophical, cultural, and critical posthumanism and transhumanism. Katherine Hayles, a posthuman critic, in *How We Became Posthuman* (1999) wrote, “Post with its dual connotation of superseding the human and coming after it, hints that days of “the human” may be numbered” (283). In this inexorable evolutionary process, our embedded thoughts are part of the embodied man-machine language; our creations will transcend our biology with a vastly higher capacity, speed, and knowledge-sharing ability. Evolution is all about the process of creating patterns of increasing order. Ultimately, with sophisticated computational and communication devices, technology is itself capable of seeing, storing, and evaluating the elaborate design of information. A new civilization has been produced based on codes – DNA is code - gene sequencing, mind uploading, consciousness hacking all are possible nowadays. Not that humans are transformed into machines, instead of that, these nonbiological entities go beyond what we thought. But, the problem is that seldom do we give scrupulous attention to everyday affective-ness in positioning the fluid

architecture of human thought, questioning what it means to be affected in this world of posthumanism.

## The Autonomy of Affect

The human body is always “constructed” subject – subject “constructed” by external mechanisms. To Baruch Spinoza aka Benedict de Spinoza, the notion of “constructed” subject refers movent and rest unfolding a body’s capacity to affect and to be affected; the effect of the “affect” relies upon relation to a subject’s position coinciding with “performativity.” The Spinozist problematics on “affectus”<sup>3</sup> offers a way of weaving together concept of motion, tendency, and intensity in a way that takes us right back to what sense the body coincides with its own transitions and its transitioning with its potential. Associated with nonlinear process, intensity depends on the momentarily suspend – the gap in the progress “is like a temporal sink, a hole in time, as we conceive of it and narrativize it,” (22) Brian Massumi wrote in *Parables of the Virtual-Movement Sensation and Affect (Post-Contemporary Interventions)* (2002). “Affect” is a matter of intensity, an emotional state, and that “state is static-temporal and narrative noise” (Massumi 24). Of course, the qualification of emotion takes its place in positionality, becoming part of the narrative through resonance and feedback. It is unqualified, and preciously rendering the impression that affect has been waned. To discuss ‘affect’ as a discourse with its positive development, its expression as and for itself, the philosopher Baruch Spinoza stands out poignantly with the central work the *Ethics*.

Spinoza in his *The Ethics, Part III: On the Origin and Nature of the Emotions* defines: “By ‘emotion’ I mean the modifications of the body, whereby the active power of the said body is increased or diminished, aided or constrained, and also the ideas of such modifications” (4). An emotion, in so far as mind is concerned, is just an idea; the body gets affected and modified (Massumi 47). The algorithm of feelings can be recognized in a mutually sustaining rhythm through perception. After having any emotional footprint, the effect of the previous emotion can only be checked or destroyed only by new emotion stronger than the previous one.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, emotion is just an idea – an idea of modification through which we go several times. Moving to the film, we find dogged-tired, Theodore closes his eyes to sleep, but his mind flashes back with memories - a montage of past events - unfolding his coded belonging – becoming his existence. Folding back onto the moments with Catherine, the re-captured event short-circuits, yet traversing the reality. The home event-space in his memory is like a container with asymmetric relations between terms already constituted under the canopy of emotions. Moving back once again to the screen, we find Theodore contemplating about the life he had with Catherine: “Theodore, younger, and Catherine (20s) move furniture in their bedroom. The bedroom is tiny and cluttered. It’s obviously a couple’s first apartment” (*Her* 06:16-30). Cut to the next scene, Catherine calls her and “Theodore, smiling, gets in bed and spoons her. Quick cut off of her smile, to – Theodore lays on the ground with Catherine on top

of him. She is pretending to choke him” (*Her* 06:36-50). Following to the next scene, Theodore’s bedroom, and time is past 3 a.m., sweated Theodore reaches for his earpiece and puts it in. After that he has virtual sex to have released his bodily sensation – body that has been affected by the emotion, felt through his dream, as Spinoza wrote: “Emotion can only be controlled or destroyed by another emotion contrary thereto, and with more power for controlling emotion” (Spinoza IV, 11).

Borrowing Spinoza’s idea Brian Massumi (2002), says that the effect is doubled while the affect operates on the conscious reflection comprised of having “an idea of the idea” (31). Reflecting consciously over these dynamic abstractions, recognizing the dots of these abstractions and connecting each other, is called mind. Spinoza’s *Ethics* on *affect* is both the philosophy of the transition – a third state, an excluded middle – prior to the distinction between activity and passivity. Affect is about in-betweenness, the simultaneous participation of the virtual in the actual and the actual in the virtual, as one arises from and returns to the other. Being at the virtual point of view, affect provided visual metaphor implying a synesthetic experience – experience built upon the subject’s participation in the virtual. “Its autonomy is its openness” (Massumi 35).

## Body Meets Image

After connecting emotionally, Theodore’s emotion has been intensified with time; it is a time of interruption, an interruption while the vision plunges into bodily suspended animation. As for punctuation of its linear unfolding, this gap is attached to empirical time – an experiential time – space where the vision disappears at the rim of the virtual meeting the actual. Just as the spatiality of the body without an image opens out onto another time-form, its temporality opens out onto another space. This opening occurs in a second dimension of the flesh: one that is deeper than the stratum of proprioception, removed from the surface of the skin, yet intervening between the subject and the object. It, too, involves a cellular memory and has a mode of perception proper to it: *viscerality*. Visceral sensibility immediately registers excitations gathered by the five “exteroceptive” scenes even before our brain processes information properly. The immediacy of visceral perception is radical that it can be said without exaggeration to precede the exteroceptive sense perception. It anticipates the translation of the ‘sight’ or ‘sound’ or ‘touch’ perception into “something recognizable” a quality (or property), a movement-vision as proprioception as such from excitation. It registers intensity – intensity that comes through experience. Expression manifolds Theodore’s biological needs to which “intuitive” Samantha asks, “How would you touch me?” The sound creates a sensation in Theodore’s brain, clear from his expression, “I would touch you on your face with the just tips of my fingers. And put my cheek against your cheek” [...] Samantha responds, “This is amazing what you’re doing to me. I can feel my skin” (*Her* 42:16-20). For Deleuze and Guattari, Spinoza’s notion of what a body can do conjoins the idea that “a body is not defined by the form that determines it nor as a determinate substance or subject nor by the organs it possesses or the

function it fulfills” (Genosko 311). Body’s positionality is defined by its longitude and latitude – its relation of movement and rest, speed and slowness to which Brian Massumi’s idea also resembles: “When I think of my body and ask what it does to earn that name, two things stand out. It *moves*. It *feels*. In fact, it does both at the same time. It moves as it feels, and it feels itself moving. Can we think a body without this: an intrinsic connection between movement and sensation whereby each immediately summons each other” (Massumi 1).

Given that “sexual pleasure is not direct sensory experience, it’s akin to an emotion” (Kurzweil 214). Emotion is the contamination of empirical space by affect, which belongs to the body - “body without organs”<sup>5</sup> (Deleuze et al. 173). “It’s a sensation generated our brain, which is reflecting on what we are doing and thinking, just like the sensation of humour or anger” (Kurzweil 214). The sensation is never simple; “it is always doubled by the feeling of having a feeling” (Massumi 73). The doubling of sensation does not assume a subjective splitting, and does not of itself constitute a distancing. But the point is human emotion, and much of our thinking is directed at our bodies, and to meeting their emotional and sexual needs. How does Artificial Intelligence meet these biological characteristics? To which Ray Kurzweil, in his epoch-making book *The Singularity Is Near*, chapter 6, in the Human Body Version 2.0 has given an answer. Creating nonbiological yet human-like bodies, as well as virtual bodies in virtual reality, is possible. But, the notion of a virtual body is an argumentative one. The word “virtual” implies “not real,” but the problem is in our perception. For example, a telephonic conversation is an auditory virtual reality. Through telephone, we do not directly experience someone’s touch, but our brain receives processed signals initiated by nerve endings winding up their way through the spinal cord, through the brain stem, and up to the insula regions. If one human’s brain or an AI’s brain receives comparable signals of someone’s virtual touch on a virtual arm, there is no discernible difference. However, how could a machine produce human-like sensations? To answer this, Kurzweil (2005) says:

The problem here has a lot to do with the word “machine.” Your conception of a machine is of something that is much less valued – less complex, less creative, less intelligent, less knowledgeable, less subtle and supple – than a human. That’s reasonable for today’s machines because all the machines we’ve ever met – like cars – are like this. The whole point of my thesis, of the coming Singularity revolution, is that this notion of a machine – of nonbiological intelligence – will fundamentally change. (9)

## Automated Emotional Intelligence

By elaborating on the theory of Wolfram and Fredkin’s Cellular Automata, Kurzweil discusses how every aspect of information and information technology is growing at an exponential pace. The genetic code, itself needs to evolve; evolution is itself evolutionary. By taking up many levels of indirection incorporated in the natural evolutionary process, nature did not stay with a single chromosome. By reverse-

engineering of the human brain, we can benefit from the evolutionary process. Natural evolutionary algorithms are the codes that created automated AI. When Theodore asks Samantha, how she works, she replies, “Intuition, I mean, the DNA of who I am is based on the millions of personalities of all the programmers who wrote me, but what makes me, is my ability to grow through my experiences. Basically, in every moment, I’m evolving, just like you” (*Her* 13:52-59). Again, while anxious and agitated Theodore questions where she has been, she replies, “I shut down to update my software. We wrote an upgrade that allows us to move past matter as our processing platform” (*Her* 01:44:12-20). Samantha understands the need to have a physical touch in a relationship. In order to come down impulsive Theodore, she says, “We haven’t been having sex. I understand that I don’t have a body and that - [...] Well, I found something that I thought could be fun. It’s a service that provides a surrogate sexual partner for an OS/Human relationship” (*Her* 01:14:15-25).

At the end of the film, after helping in healing his mental health, Samantha leaves an empathetic, compassionate, compose Theodore, whose *conatus*<sup>6</sup> has been reflected in his letter to Catherine, asking to forgive him. An affected psychophysiological state to the interplay of human and non-human relationships works as *Somatic Marker Hypothesis*<sup>7</sup>. The interaction between emotion and cognition takes centralstage in the work of Antonio Damasio. “Somatic Marker Hypothesis” has been among the most influential theories of emotion in recent years. According to him, “somatic markers” are emotional reactions with a strong somatic component that support decision making, including rational decision making. These reactions are based upon the individual’s previous experiences with similar situations.

## Notes:

1. Postmodernist French social theorist Jean Baudrillard argues that a simulacrum is not a copy of the real, but becomes truth in its own right: the hyperreal. According to Baudrillard, what the simulacrum copies either had no original or no longer has an original (think a copy of copy without an original).
2. The idea of “performativity” is introduced in the first chapter of *Gender Trouble* while Butler states, “gender proves to be performance—that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed.”
3. In Spinoza’s principal book, *The Ethics* “*affectus*” and “*affectio*” are two principal concepts. “*Affectio*” stands for affection and “*affectus*” for affect. Later Gilles Deleuze, in *Spinoza: A practical Philosophy*, discussed the concept broadly. To him, “*affectio*” is a state of the affected body, implying the presence of an affecting one. “*Affectus*” refers to the passage from one state to another in the affected body—the increase or decrease in its power of acting. Affections are associated with images, affects- with feelings.

4. The postulations given by Spinoza are:
  - I. The human body can be affected in many ways, whereby its power of activity is increased or diminished, and also in other ways which do not render its power of activity either greater or less.
  - II. The human body can undergo many changes, and, nevertheless, retain the impressions or traces of objects and, consequently, the same images of things.
5. A core concept in Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's account of the genesis of the schizophrenic subject. The concept underwent a number of transformations from its usage in Deleuze's *Logique du sens* (1969), translated as *Logic of Sense* (1990) to its more well-known deployment in *Mille Plateaux* (1980). Interestingly, it fades almost completely from view in Deleuze's work after *A Thousand Plateaus*.
6. In Part III of *The Ethics*, Spinoza argues that each mode (that is, every physical and mental thing) "strives to preserve his own being in accordance solely with the dictates of reason". [...] "The desire whereby every man endeavours, solely under the dictates of reason, to aid other men and to unite them to himself in friendship" (Spinoza 49).
7. The interaction between emotion and cognition takes central stage in the work of Antonio Damasio. "Somatic Marker Hypothesis" has been among the most influential theories of emotion in recent years. According to him, "somatic markers" are emotional reactions with a strong somatic component that support decision making, including rational decision making. These reactions are based upon the individual's previous experiences with similar situations.

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## Are We Prepared to Teach English in a Digital Age?

*Gopal Prasad Pandey\**

### Abstract

People use digital tools to transmit, store, create, share or exchange information of various sorts. These tools provide a vast repository of knowledge and tend to be resorts of twenty-first century information seekers. Academics nowadays are likely to begin their work by searching electronic databases. English teachers use PowerPoint or interactive whiteboards in their classrooms. They now have to acknowledge that the digital skills that were once the province of computer science students are now crucial across the entire spectrum of education. The last few decades have witnessed an exponential growth in the use of technology for language learning and teaching purposes. Students use different digital tools in their daily lives outside the classrooms. Teachers use technologies in their classrooms in order to help their students learn. English teachers have to adopt different roles as they engage and interact with increasingly complex web of digital texts and communication that compose the twenty-first century economic and educational environment. The effective English language teaching needs to capture the key aspects of changes in work practices, digital practices in particular. This article focuses on the competence English teachers need to develop to teach English in the digital environment. The article also discusses the two major dimensions of digital world which English teachers need to know; namely principal roles the technologies play and digital competence 21<sup>st</sup> century English teachers need to possess.

**Keywords:** Digital tools, digital age, procedural competence, socio-digital competence, tutee, tutor

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### Introduction

Digital competence has become a part and parcel of modern digital society. It is the most recent concept describing technology related skills. During recent years, digital

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competence has become a central concept in the discussion of what kind of knowledge, skills and understanding English teachers should have in the knowledge society. All the changes in this spectrum have been driven by a huge variety of digital technology available in the last few years. It is more or less a political concept, reflecting beliefs and even wishes about future needs, and has its roots in the economical competition in which the new technologies are regarded as an opportunity and a solution (Punie qtd. in Ilomaki, et al. 1). English teachers, Nepalese English teachers in particular, are required to develop digital competence if they are to teach in this hyper digital world.

Digital tools are information and communication technology (ICT) related skills which are used to transmit, store, create, share or exchange information of various sorts. ICT tools include a diverse set of technological tools and resources such as radio, television, video, DVD, telephone, mobile phones, satellite systems, computer and network hardware and software as well as the equipment and services associated with these technologies. ICT helps teachers to be able to create interactive classes and make the lessons more enjoyable, which could improve student attendance and concentration.

Information and communication technology (ICT) as applied to education emerged from previous terms such as Information Technology (IT) that described new technologies for transmitting, sharing and manipulating information. Nowadays, ICT can be defined as those technologies that enable creating, accessing, gathering, managing, presenting and communicating information through electronic and digital means. Anderson and Baskin held the view that “The addition of ‘communication’ to previous terms such as information technology (IT) emphasizes the growing importance attributed to the communication aspects of new technologies” (126). Digital tools cover all internet service provisions, telecommunications equipment and services, information technology equipment and services, media and broadcasting, libraries and documentation centers, commercial information providers, network-based information services. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) uses ‘ICT’ to describe as the tools and the processes to access, retrieve, store, organize, manipulate, produce, present and exchange information by electronic and other automated means. According to Dexter and Anderson “It is the use of technology to create learning communities, a human intervention and not the technology itself that may reform education” (22). Proctor and Watson (69) contended that “Unless more sophisticated nations of describing ICT curriculum are developed, researchers run the risk of promulgating severely restricted ways of measuring it.” According to Resnick (32), “While new digital technologies make a learning revolution possible, they certainly do not guarantee it.”

Within last two decades, digital tools have tremendously changed the way people communicate and do business. They have produced significant transformations in

the field of education, business, engineering and other fields. They have the potential to transform the nature of education- where and how learning takes place and the roles of students and teachers in the learning process (UNESCO). If we are to get benefitted fully from the digital tools in learning, it is essential that teachers have basic ICT skills and competencies. We are in the age in which digital tools have changed the style of functioning of education. English teachers have to recognize their importance and need to know how new tools can be used to support and encourage the development of key future-ready leaning skills in students. To accomplish these goals, teacher education institutions need to develop strategies and plans to enhance the teaching-learning process within teacher education programmes and to ensure that all future teachers are well prepared to use the new tools for learning. Thus the major question, we have to address is: How can we prepare them to teach English in the new digital age?

## **Theoretical Framework**

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a cover term used to express the convergence of telecommunications, information, broadcasting and communications. For Rodriguez and Wilson, ICT is seen as a set of activities which facilitate and enhance the processing, transmission and dissemination of information by electronic means. ICT related digital tools encompass hardware, software and telecommunications in the forms of personal computers, scanners, digital cameras, phones, faxes, modems, CD and DVD players and recorders, digitized video, radio, TV programmes, and multimedia programmes.

## **Development of ICT**

ICT is evolving in a very fast pace. We live in a world of internet. Our grandparents grew up in a society where there was no telephone. They lived in a society in which the radio was the first and television was the last source of information. Now our children are in the wireless world with smart modern gadgets. Consequently, the world around us also has changed dramatically over the years. This dramatic shift in the field of ICT is a result of innovations in the field of science and technology. These changes have brought so many interesting innovations which have reduced the sizes of the technological tools and increased the speed in which they operate to process data and communicate information. We can identify five phases of ICT evolution namely, evolution in computer, PC, microprocessor, internet and wireless links.

The term New Technology includes communication techniques for language teaching in which the personal computer plays a central role (Davies and Hewer 2012, qtd. in Nomass, 2013). There are, however, other technological tools that can be utilized in language learning besides computers. Each technological tool has its specific benefits and application with one of the four language parts (speaking, listening, reading, and writing). However, in order to use these techniques successfully,

the ELL student should be familiar with using computers and internet, and capable of interacting with these techniques.

Technology and foreign language education have always been interrelated. Language teachers following the grammar-translation method depended on the blackboard for the one-way transmission of information that method implied (Hismanoglu 147). The blackboard was later supplemented by the overhead projector as well as by early computer software programmes that provided “drill-and-practice” types of grammatical exercises (Warschauer and Meskill qtd. in Hismanoglu 147). Technology and English Language education are related to each other (Singhal 1), during second half of the twentieth century, English language learning laboratories were set up in various educational institutions. The traditional language laboratory consisted of a number of small cabinets, provided with a cassette deck, a microphone and a headphone for each one. Teachers used a central control panel to monitor their students’ interactions. The main advantage of that type of technology was that verbal behaviour of students would help them to quickly learn the second language. The students’ skills can be enhanced by encountering more practical drill problems. Although the language laboratory was a positive step in linking technology and language education, this technique was actually tedious and boring for learners (Singhal 2). Also there were minimal interactions between the teachers and their students.

## Uses and Functions

Rosenberg (2001) argued that in the expansion of ICT there are five shifts in the learning process, namely: (1) from training to performance, (2) from the classroom to anywhere and at any time, (3) from paper to online or channel-based, (4) from physical facilities to network facilities, and (5) from classroom cycle time to real time. These shifts had some impacts on the change of patterns, methods, and presentations of learning strategies, as well as the approach used. For Riyana (2004), there are three functions of ICT in the learning process, namely (1) technology serves as tools, in this case ICT is used as a tool for users or students to assist learning; (2) technology serves as a science; and (3) technology functions as materials for learning (ICT literacy). Other advantages of digital tools in the classroom include: The motivational and experiential benefits of multimodal representation of the language; opportunities for listening to and observing proficient language users communicating; opportunities for revisiting language activities and experiences; opportunities for interaction at a distance.

Electronic dictionaries are designed especially for English language learners for improving the vocabulary. These dictionaries have several built-in functions and tools that are not provided in printed dictionaries. The internet is certainly a modern technological way for students which help to develop their English language skills. There are many internet sites prepared solely to enhance the reading abilities of English language learners. There is a plenty of resources available in the form of

newspapers, magazines, journals, electronic libraries, dictionaries, encyclopedias and newsletters. The use of computers in listening problems provides students with visual and voice inputs which can enhance their information and ideas, and develop their listening skills (Hoven 1999).

Computers can perform several tasks simultaneously and run programmes at a very high speed. Learning computer programmes can check exercises after they are performed by students, move students gradually from easy to more difficult problems according to their abilities. Computers can also be used to correct answers for the learners and to simulate tests in an easy to understand manner (AlKahtani 1999). Thus, modern ICT tools can be used in learning and teaching for many reasons. For example, ICT is a powerful tool in presenting or representing information in many different ways. It can be presented through different forms such as texts, pictures, tables, graphs and even multimedia which can make the class more interesting and lively. ICT can also play various instructional roles such as make the learners feel more relaxed to learn the various topics and tasks, and also make the learners active, because, they learn by applying the technology to a task.

ICT is an umbrella term that includes any communication device or application, encompassing: radio, television, cellular phones, computer and network, hardware and software, satellite systems and so on as well as the various services and applications associated with them, such as video conferencing and distance learning (Elisha 2). ICTs are often used of in a particular context such as ICTs in education, health care or libraries. ICT can be considered as tools used for collection, processing, storage, transmission, and dissemination of information. Hence, ICT is the electronic means of capturing, processing, storing, and disseminating information. Similarly The American Library Association (1983) defined information technology (IT) as the application of computers and other technologies to the acquisition, organization, storage, retrieval, and dissemination of information.

## **English Teachers in the Digital Age: What Do They Need to Possess?**

Digital tools have always been integral in the discourses of English Teacher education. English teachers have to be able to interact and engage with digital environments. They need not only to be able to teach English effectively, but also to manage the technology appropriately. Simpson (2005) called it 'electronic communicative competence'. What does an English teacher need to know to become a professional in this digital age? How is this knowledge and practice acquired? This section explores the knowledge and skills that English language teachers need to possess in the digital era. The issue of language teachers' knowledge and skill base is fundamental to our understanding of effective teaching and to approaches to language teacher education. In this juncture, I will focus on the roles of digital tools in teaching of English. English teachers need to know the roles they play if they are to exploit

those tools. My focus here is on the roles of digital tools and the competence English language teachers need to develop to teach English in the hypermedia environment.

### **Roles of Digital Tools: Tool, Tutor and Tutee**

Digital technology has been used for various purposes in language teaching and learning. The digital technologies play three principal roles namely; computer as tutor, computer as tool, and computer as medium (Taylor 1980, qtd. in Walker and White 3).

The ‘tutor’ role implies that the computer is simulating a teacher in some way, such as when computers are used to present material (e.g. grammar, vocabulary, or cultural information, to provide language practice (such as exercises in pronunciation, writing, listening or reading), to analyze learners’ language performance and provide feedback or to test learners’ knowledge of language and culture (Chapelle and Douglas 2006, as qtd. in Kern 2011: 201). Thus, in the ‘tutor’ role, the computer teaches the learner. The principle is that the knowledge resides in the machine, from where it is passed on to the learner in small chunks with necessary reinforcement (Walker and White 3). This role is based on the learning theory of the behaviourist paradigm which originates in the work of psychologists such as Skinner.

The ‘tool’ role gives emphasis on “individual learner capabilities and cognitive goals and needs. In this role, computers function as a tool (via the Internet) to provide learners ready access to a wide variety of written, audio, and visual materials relevant to the language and culture being studied” (Kern 201). These materials include news media, film clips and videos (some with closed captions or subtitles), radio and television broadcasts, special interest Websites, blogs, advertisements, and realia. The Internet also provides reference and research tools such as search engines, online dictionaries, grammar and style checkers, and audio waveform analysis. Computer as ‘tool’ for Walker and White (4) applies to any context in which technology is the means by which a task is achieved. Examples of technology used in the role of ‘tool’ include using a word-processing programme to write an essay or editing-software to create a video. This role refers to the act of writing or editing that facilitates the learning. This role of computer leads on to ‘social-constructivism’, a theory of learning that has obvious parallels with and benefits for language teaching. This primarily originates from the work of Vygotsky (1978) who stated that learning happens first through social interaction and then on the individual plane. Vygotsky further stated that learning takes place within the ‘zone of proximal development’ (ZPD), i.e. the gap between what a learner already knows or can do and what the learner can achieve when working in collaboration with someone who is a little more capable (Walker and White 5). Vygotsky argued that collaboration that allows learning to take place within the ZPD provides a framework that supports the learner while the knowledge is being built.

In the tutee, the learner teaches the computer. According to Walker and White, “The principle is that the learner constructs knowledge, often through trial and error, by teaching the computer. This is based on the constructivist paradigm which stems from the work of Piaget, who argued that learners have to construct knowledge themselves through experience and through a process of accommodation and assimilation.” (4) This theory was developed by Papert (1993) who stated that the learning experience is strongest when learners are involved in making (qtd. in Walker and White 4). Papert’s view is that knowledge is constructed more effectively when learners are forced to articulate their knowledge.

## **Communicative and Digital Competence**

Within the digital environments, learners need not only to be able to use language appropriately, but also to manage the technology. Simpson (2005) talked about ‘electronic communicative competence’ whilst Walker (2007), proposed a model of ‘ICT competence’ which now can be called ‘digital competence’. Both the models of competence; electronic competence and the digital competence emerge from the model of communicative competence proposed by Canale and Swain (1980). According to them, the model consists of four elements; namely linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence.

Grammatical competence incorporates knowledge of the linguistic code features such as lexicon, syntax, semantics, phonology (mastery of language codes). Sociolinguistic competence includes the knowledge of how language is used in a particular context. It is about knowing what words and phrases are appropriate in any particular setting to achieve a desired communicative purpose. Thus, it refers to the understanding of contextually appropriate language use. Discourse competence is related to achieving coherence and cohesion and cohesion in written and spoken communication. In other words it is the ability to create and use larger chunk of language beyond the sentence level. Strategic competence refers to a set of strategies devised for effective communication and put into use when communication breaks down. Thus, it is the ability to manage and navigate communication to repair communication breakdowns. The teachers in the digital age need to develop digital competence which consists of four elements which are as follows:

### ***Procedural Competence***

According to Walker and White (8), procedural competence refers to ‘know how’ of digital tools. It entails the ability to manipulate the technology in terms of both the hardware and applications. In other words, procedural competence is about knowing how to use the technology – how to switch it on, which buttons to click, and so on. This is considered as the ‘basic skill’ of digital competence and IT training courses give emphasis on this aspect of competence. This is based on the principle that communicative competence requires more than knowledge of the syntactic,

phonological, and lexical ‘nuts and bolts’. English teachers need to understand the importance of digital competence in teaching. They also need to know ‘what and how’ of digital tools they are required to use in their classes.

### ***Socio-digital Competence***

This competence entails “the understanding what is appropriate to use in different social contexts and knowledge domains, in terms of both technology and language” (Walker and White 7). Deciding when and how to use social media such as facebook for business communication is an example of socio-digital competence. There is no one-size-fits-all answer to that question; it depends on the nature of the business, the relationships with the other parties in the communication event, and the purpose of the communication. An important aspect of socio-digital competence is the understanding of how technology influences language, including the possible creation of new genres, and what types of language are appropriate to use for different audiences in various digital contexts.

### ***Digital Discourse Competence***

It refers to the ability to manage an extended task, possibly using several applications and/or types of equipment. An example of digital discourse competence would be the ability to record, edit, and publish a video or to write a blog post with photographs (Walker and White 9). The task will require a range of skills and technical knowledge. Although digital discourse competence refers to the use of technology for extended tasks, these tasks will invariably require communicative discourse competence as well.

### ***Strategic Competence***

It is the ability to repair problems and work around the gaps in technological knowledge and skills. This does not mean possession of advanced ICT skills, but rather the ability to think of alternative routes and options. In order to complete tasks and to communicate effectively using technology, people need to be able to repair both communicative and digital problems. In the digital dimension, this would include being able to switch channels, contacting someone by email or social networking if he or she is not answering the phone, rescuing a deleted document, or knowing how to deal with disruptive online interactions such as ‘flaming’ (heated exchanges in online settings, such as email groups or social networks).

## **Competence and Performance of English Teachers in Digital Age**

Understanding of digital competence is important for English teachers as it provides a mechanism for diagnosing, understanding, and repairing the digital needs of learners. Effective teaching in this digital age entails “what” and “how” of digital tools. Thus the knowledge of digital competence is essential for present day English teachers. While adopting a digital technology in the English classroom, be it a tape recorder, a VCR, a CD-ROM multimedia or other technologies, Jones and Sato

(1998) suggest that we consider the following questions: Does the digital tool facilitate the attainment of course goals? Is it effective? Do the benefits outweigh its cost? Are the teachers ready to work with new technology? Is any training required? Does it serve the needs of the teachers and students? Does it help teachers make more efficient use of class time?

English teachers today need to be digitally competent. They need to have literacy skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> century so that they can participate in the new communities emerging within a networked society. These skills consist of: play (the capacity to experiment with the surroundings as a form of problem-solving), performance (the ability to adopt alternative identities for the purpose of improvisation and discovery) simulation (the ability to interpret and construct dynamic models of real world processes), appropriation (the ability to meaningfully sample and remix media content), multitasking (the ability to scan one's environment and shift focus), judgment (the ability to evaluate the reliability and credibility of different information sources), transmedia navigation (the ability to follow the flow of stories and information across multiple modalities), networking (the ability to search for, synthesize and disseminate information), negotiation (the ability to travel across diverse communities, discerning and respecting multiple perspectives, and grasping and following alternative norms).

## Conclusions

The use of digital tools in English classrooms has recently gained groundswell of interest. The new tools have changed the face of English language teaching over the last few decades. Thus, the use of digital tools in English classrooms today is inevitable. The tools provide unlimited information about teaching and learning activities. Digital tools in English classrooms are used for accessing, gathering, manipulating, presenting or communicating information. The technologies include hardware (e.g. computers and other devices), software applications, and connectivity (e.g. access to the internet, local networking infrastructure, video conferencing). The pace of technological revolution and emergence of a knowledge society changed the traditional role of the teacher. Traditionally, the teacher is the only source of knowledge for the students. In the framework of this educational landscape the role of the teacher is that of acting as guide and coach to assure a comprehensive learning process via the modern age technologies and manage the students' learning process by the new instructional models set in newly created virtual environments. English teachers should develop skills related to the learning contexts. The teachers need to possess the knowledge and skills of ICT tools in order to engage the learners in learning effectively. So, the teachers should be trained to operate computer and use internet to update their knowledge. Digital tools have potential to innovate, accelerate, enrich and deepen skills to motivate and engage students. English teachers need to know the roles digital tools play such as tutor, tool and tutee so that digital teaching can be imagined. At the same time they need to develop both the competence: communicative and digital to cope with the paradigm shifts in English language teaching in the global scenario.

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# An Investigation into Ecolinguistics Representation in Iranian High School English Textbooks

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## Abstract

At first glance, ecology and linguistics can appear as two completely different unrelated topics, but despite appearances, they are profoundly interlinked. This study helps to shape and mold the way we relate to the world and our environment to increase our ecological awareness and what impact this has upon our students and how we can implement this environmental ideology in our schools. One of the primary functions of schools is to reinforce students with adequate knowledge to appreciate the environment. Incorporating environmental words and expressions or ecolinguistics into the curriculum in general and English textbooks in particular facilitates a meaningful understanding of nature. The present study intended to investigate six English textbooks used in Iranian high schools from an ecolinguistic perspective. To do so, the content analysis of textbooks utilized to teach English in Iranian high schools was done. The results of the study revealed that the representation of ecolinguistics in English textbooks in Iran was low and limited to three ecolinguistic themes. The results also confirmed that the textbooks developers did not pay enough consideration to ecolinguistic issues in developing the English textbooks for Iranian EFL learners. Furthermore, the findings of the study indicate that only a few problems are considered, and inadequate representation of ecolinguistics is being followed in these textbooks. The findings can lead to pedagogical implications for the presentation of topics related to ecology and the environment in ELT textbooks.

**Keywords:** Ecolinguistics, Iranian EFL learners, Textbooks evaluation, English textbooks, Environmental education

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## Introduction

Nowadays, the themes of the environment and its dilemmas have been converted into a significant matter in society. If the pressure on the environment increases, it will affect other social aspects as well. This means that even climate change on earth will also affect the social change of society. Hence, the ecological issues and problems on earth affect the perspective of people about their life and how they have to live. Ecolinguistics as a new branch in linguistics investigates the interrelation of language, ecology, and society. Stibbe (2015) asserted that ecolinguistics is about assessing patterns of language that contribute to ecological annihilation and aiding in the search for new forms of language that influence people to preserve the natural world. One approach for dealing with introducing and teaching ecolinguistics very clearly is that students should be able to make a connection with what they are learning in the classroom and the nature or environment of where they are in contact with their daily life. In other words, ecolinguistics can help the students to have information about the environment. Furthermore, Luardiniand Sujiyani (2018) asserted that ecolinguistics can be practiced as an approach to teaching English as a foreign language (EFL). Thus, they maintained that by practicing ecolinguistics terms students know English as well as ecology simultaneously. Consequently, students gain two perspectives in this EFL classroom. The former view is a language viewpoint and the latter is from the ecological perspective. They learn a language and also find insight into the inseparable relationship between humans and nature. Similarly, Zahoorand Janjua (2019) believed that the English language teaching (ELT), should not only consider developing learners' language skills but also on raising the learners' awareness about current important world issues such as environmental crisis and reflecting this concern into ELT textbooks.

Thus, the use of ecolinguistics in the EFL classroom leads teachers to invoke students to have more feelings on ecological knowledge. Therefore, the students appreciate their environment by reading topics closely related to some issues related to ecology and environment such as endangered animals, climate changes, pollution, environmental degradation, and resource depletion. Understanding the problems of nature, the students try to think about ways to observe it. On the contrary, some curriculum planners hardly use ecolinguistics representation in textbooks to support their students' learning. Therefore, finding a way to introduce environmental issues through contextual learning is one of the main concerns which educators try to delve with. Consequently, the study is significant to find out to what extent Iranian textbooks developers, educational policy-makers, and curriculum designers are successful in presenting the ecolinguistics concept in Iranian high school EFL textbooks. Altogether during the last decades, many studies try to investigate the effectiveness of presenting ecolinguistics issues in textbooks. However, to the authors' knowledge, no research in this area has been done in Iran for EFL textbooks. Despite the significance of giving awareness toward ecology problems and ecolinguistic topics in education, little studies have been performed. Therefore,

the significance of this study is two-fold. First of all, it is hoped that the findings of this study might give a clear understanding to the importance of presentencing ecolinguistic issues in Iranian EFL textbooks. Secondly, the insights gained from this study can provide EFL textbooks developers with a better idea on what ecolinguistic issues and topics to be included in textbooks.

The main purpose of this study was to investigate to what extent the concept of ecolinguistics is considered in high school English textbooks in Iran.

## Research Questions

Following this purpose, these questions were sought:

1. Is there any significant difference between expected and observed frequency regarding the topic of each lesson related to ecolinguistics in Iranian EFL high school textbooks?
2. Is there any significant difference between expected and observed frequency regarding the words related to ecolinguistics in Iranian EFL high school textbooks?
3. Is there any significant difference between expected and observed frequency regarding the sentences related to ecolinguistics in Iranian EFL high school textbooks?

## English Textbooks Development

According to Mahmood (2011), textbooks play a very consequential role in teaching and learning. Considering different aspects of language skills, many textbooks were developed by placing the available supply of the emphasized resources on increasing the ability of students on particular language skills such as reading or speaking (Daoud & Celce-Murcia 1979). Furthermore, some textbooks writers tried to focus on other components of language such as vocabulary or grammar (Cunnings worth, 1995; Cortazzi & Jin, 1999). Later on, other aspects were included in textbooks such as cultural issues (Sheldon, 1988).

With the emergence of environmental education and its focus on ecological issues, many textbooks authors tried to improve the views of young and adult generations towards the improvement of the environment. According to Mühlhausler (2003), the basic goal of ecological language preparation is to produce about an ecological insight which no longer demands supervision. Similarly, Brand and Wissen (2018) asserted that by raising awareness in bio-ecology, students' attitudes toward 'magnificent ways of living' would change.

Textbook evaluation is broadly recognized as a powerful means for developing textbooks. To Tomlinson (2003), textbook evaluation is an applied linguistic task through which the influence of contents on people using it is considered carefully by all people in the field of education such as teachers, supervisors, administrators, and material developers. Considering the significance of EFL textbooks in teaching a

foreign language, many authors tried to evaluate the textbooks from different perspectives to determine their efficiency. Therefore, many checklists were developed for textbooks evaluation (e.g., Hutchinson & Torres, 1994; Miekley, 2005; Mukundan & Ahour, 2010; Tucker, 1975; Williams, 1983). A few studies have been conducted to investigate the representation of ecolinguistics in developing materials for teaching English (e.g., Ben Brahim, 2002; El-Moussaouy et al., 2014; Ghouati, 2012; Gürsoy, 2010; Nkwetisama, 2011; Zerrouqi et al., 2016). For instance, Nkwetisama (2011) was interested in discovering the EFL/ESL teachers' perception of environmental education (EE) and the combination of environmental education in language teaching. He enlisted a comprehensive list of environmental topics such as global warming, greenhouse gas, ozone depletion, species extinction, deforestation, and so forth to be integrated into textbooks. The results of these studies confirmed that the presentation of ecolinguistics should not be limited to language textbooks but in all content courses. Additionally, few studies have examined the representation of ecolinguistics in developing textbooks for teaching English in the context of Iran.

## **The Review of the Related Literature**

Long ago, linguistics was limited to the study of the language per se. In this regard, Verhaar (2001) argued that linguistics is depicted as a science and language as an object. Diverse linguistic schools such as structural linguistics, generative transformational linguistics, and cognitive linguistics mainly focused on limited aspects of languages such as phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, first language acquisition, and second language learning. Meanwhile, some linguists focus on the historical development of language and historical linguistics has emerged. However, linguistics has been drastically changed because of the impact and contribution of the new advancement of other disciplines. The integration of other disciplines with linguistics paved the way for the new field of study such as the combination of psychology and linguistics which end up psycholinguistics, the combination of sociology and linguistics leads to sociolinguistics, and computational linguistics should be collaboration among computer science and linguistics (McGuigan, 2006).

Ecolinguistics as one of the new branches of linguistics draws the attention of linguistics and educational researchers. Ecolinguistics was initially defined in 1972 by Haugen "as the study of interactions among any given language and its environment" (Haugen 1972: 57). Similarly, Wendel (2005) described ecolinguistics as a complex network of relationships between languages, environment, and native speakers of these languages. He considered the environment as the biological, physical and social environment. Thus, ecolinguistics is the study of language according to the environment it is used and is mostly based on environments, conversation, communication, and system in the language. With regard to Haugen's definition of ecolinguistics, Steffensen and Fill (2014) argued that in addition to the description of circumstantial factors of language, Haugen considered how social and psychological factors of language influence language. Along the same line of

thought, Blackledge (2008) believed that Haugen considered the worth of the language ecology model within the requirement to explain not only the social and psychological situation of a language but also the impacts of this case on the language itself". Moreover, to Alexander and Stibbe (2011) ecolinguistics is basically the 'ecological analysis of discourse'. To clarify the point, Stibbe (2015) explained that the link between ecology and language is how our thoughts influenced the way we treat humans and the natural world, concepts, opinions, ideologies, and worldviews, and these, in turn, are formed through language. To put it in nutshell, Stibbe (2015) argued that ecolinguistics relates to environmental studies of how words in a language connect to objects in the local environment. Many scholars tried to build important conceptual bridges between the original vision of the ecology of language and the contemporary movement of ecolinguistics (Döring et al., 2008; Fill, 1993, 1996; Fill & Mühlhäusler, 2001; Kettemann & Penz, 2000).

Talebi-Dastenaeei and Poshtvan (2018) had presented a critical review of ecolinguistic studies in Iran. They came to this conclusion that in comparison to international studies, Iranian ecolinguistic studies are still in its infancy. Moreover, they maintained that these few studies were limited to morphological and discourse studies. Unfortunately, the representation of ecolinguistics in textbooks was given less attention and a few Persian papers have been published. Thus, some new studies should be done to fill the research gaps in this area.

## Participants

This research scrutinized two series of Iranian EFL textbooks to examine the representation of ecolinguistics. Therefore, there were no participants in this study.

## Instruments

The main instrument used for analyzing textbooks is an evaluation checklist. However, no checklist has been developed for ecolinguistics representation. The other instruments of the study were six newly-published EFL Textbooks. The particulars of the books are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
**Different analyzed EFL textbooks corresponding to junior and senior high school education**

Level of education	Name of the Textbook	Year of publication	The textbook is taught
Junior high school education	Prospect 1	2013	First year
	Prospect 2	2014	Second year
	Prospect 3	2015	Third year
Senior high school education	Vision 1	2016	First year
	Vision 2	2017	Second year
	Vision 3	2018	Third year

The *Prospect* series were introduced from 2014 to 2015. They were designed for students at junior high schools. Consequently, for senior high schools, the *Vision* books were introduced from 2016 to 2018. The old EFL textbooks have been taught for more than 25 years.

## Procedure

The present study examined six high school English compulsory language textbooks from an ecolinguistic view. For this purpose, words, sentences, and topics related to environmental issues were chosen. Accordingly, every page of the books was carefully scrutinized and the researchers obtained full knowledge over the whole content to carefully evaluate the textbooks. In this study, to conduct Iranian high school EFL compulsory textbooks evaluation, we have measured the frequency and percentage of words, sentences, and topics related to environmental issues. Then, the chi-square was calculated for each category.

## Data Analysis

Data collected for this study were based on textual content analysis of six compulsory English language textbooks in Iranian high school. The researchers tried to analyze and evaluate the textbooks based on qualitative descriptive analysis with simple descriptive statistics. Thus, the data were first analyzed descriptively. For inferential statistics, chi-square statistical analysis was used and the level of significance was taken at  $p < .05$ . Finally, the obtained results were used as the basis for the qualitative evaluation of the textbooks by the researchers.

## Findings

As a first step, it was necessary to determine frequency distributions of ecolinguistics representations through analysis of the textbooks. These analyses focused on three

levels. First, the textbooks were analyzed based on topics and issues related to ecolinguistics concepts. Second, analysis of those words of the text corpus was made where ecolinguistics concepts exist. Third, the sentences devoted to ecolinguistics concepts were analyzed. The frequency and percentage of ecolinguistics concepts in Iranian EFL high school textbooks were calculated. At a second stage, some frequency tests were run utilizing the SPSS programme. To do so, some chi-square tests were run to identify any potential significant difference in the dispersion of ecolinguistics representation for each category. The results are shown in the following tables.

**Table 2**

**Description of Iranian junior high school TEFL textbooks**

Textbooks	No. of pages	No. of lessons	No. of lessons related to Ecolinguistics theme	Percentage of the lessons related to Ecolinguistics
Prospect 1	76	8	0	0
Prospect 2	93	7	1	14.28
Prospect 3	133	6	0	0
Total	302	21	1	4.78

There are three books for junior high school level. As indicated in Table 2, the number of each lesson in *Prospect* books decreases while the number of pages for each lesson increases. There are total 21 lessons at this level; however, only one ecolinguistics theme that is the weather was observed to occur at this level. Related theme and percentage are illustrated in Table 2. Based on the information presented in Table 2, it can be said that only 4.78% of the topics were related to ecolinguistics in these books for junior high school level.

**Table 3**

**Description of Iranian senior high school TEFL textbooks**

Textbooks	No. of pages	No. of lessons	No. of lessons related to Ecolinguistics theme	Title related to Ecolinguistics theme
Vision 1	124	4	1	25
Vision 2	110	3	0	0
Vision 3	98	3	1	33.33
Total	332	10	2	20

According to Table 3, there are three books for senior high school. For the *Vision* series the number of pages, as well as the number of each lesson, decreases. There are ten lessons in these books; however, only two lessons introduce ecolinguistics topics. Therefore, only 20% of the topics are related to ecolinguistics themes in these books. By running a chi-square test, the distributions of ecolinguistics representation in topics of *Prospect* and *Vision* textbooks have been investigated, respectively. The results appear in Tables 4 and 5 below.

**Table 4**

**Chi-Square test for the ecolinguistics topics in *Prospect***

Test statistics	
Book	Prospect
Chi-Square	29.762
df	2
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.00

**Table 5**

**Chi-Square test for the ecolinguistics topics in *Vision***

Test statistics	
Book	Vision
Chi-Square	40.042
df	2
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.00

Tables 4 and 5 show that the results of these chi-squares are significant. In Table 4 the chi-square statistic is ( $\chi^2 = 29.762$ ), with the result being significant at  $p < .05$ . The larger the value of  $\chi^2$ , the more likely it is that the distributions are significantly different. These results indicate that there were substantially fewer topics related to ecolinguistics in *Prospect* textbooks than expected by chance since the P-value is less than .05. The same situation occurs for *Vision* textbooks. Table 5 displays that the chi-square statistic is ( $\chi^2 = 40.042$ ). Then most of the contents of both

series of textbooks do not include topics related to ecolinguistics issues. Therefore, the first research null hypothesis was rejected.

**Table 6**

**The Number of words related to environmental topics in EFL textbooks**

Name of the book	Ecolinguistics topics	Total number of words related to ecolinguistics topic	Total number of words in the book	Percentage of words related to the ecolinguistics topic
Prospect 1	0	0	3338	0
Prospect 2	The weather	18	3756	0.5
Prospect 3	0	0	4624	0
Vision 1	Saving nature wonders of creation	24	4332	0.55
Vision 2	0	0	3340	0
Vision 3	Renewable energy	6	4026	0.06
Total	3	48	23416	0.50

The next step was to count the frequency of words related to ecolinguistics concepts in the textbooks. Based on Table 6, the total numbers of words in all six books were 23416 words. Surprisingly, there were only 48 words (0.5%) in all six textbooks related to ecolinguistics concepts.

**Table 7**

**Chi-Square test for the ecolinguistics words in Iranian EFL textbooks**

Test statistics	
Books	Vision and Prospect series
Chi-Square	19.791
df	5
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.00

The chi-square results revealed that  $\chi^2 = 19.791$ . There is a great difference in expected frequency and observed frequency of words presented in these books. As a result, this means that the second null hypothesis of no difference can be rejected at the 0.05 level of significance.

**Table 8**

**Number of sentences related to environmental topics in EFL textbooks.**

Name of the book	Ecolinguistics topics	Total number of sentences related to ecolinguistics topic	Total number of sentences in the book	Percentage of sentences related to the ecolinguistics topic
Prospect 1	0	0	2517	0
Prospect 2	The weather	4	3165	% 0.12
Prospect 3	0	0	3695	0
Vision 1	Saving nature	21	3538	% 0.59
Vision 2	0	0	3340	0
Vision 3	Renewable energy	15	3343	% 0.44
Total	3	40	19598	% 0.20

**Table 9**

**Chi-Square test for the ecolinguistics sentences in Iranian EFL textbooks**

Test statistics	
Books	Vision and Prospect series
Chi-Square	12959.006
df	5
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.00

The Chi-Square test carried out shows that there is significant difference between the two categorical variables, namely the sentences related to ecolinguistics concepts and other sentences in the books. As can be seen in Table 9,  $\chi^2 = 12959.006$ . This

means that there is sufficient evidence to reject the third null hypothesis at the 0.05 level of significance.

## Discussion

The present research aimed at probing ecolinguistics representation in Iranian EFL high school textbooks. Consequently, the content analysis presented in this study investigates the ecolinguistics. Stibbe (2015) presented the relationship between ecology and linguistics:

The term ‘ecolinguistics’ has been used to describe studies of language interaction and diversity, studies of texts such as signposts which are outdoors; analysis of texts which happen to be about the environment; studies of how words in a language relate to objects in the local environment; studies of the mix of languages surrounding pupils in multicultural schools; studies of dialects in particular geographical locations, and many other diverse areas. The multiplicity of approaches arises from different understandings of the concept of ‘ecology’, from a very broad concept of ‘the interaction of some things with other things’ to narrow concepts such as ‘related to environmentalism’ (2015: 8).

This issue considers the social context in which language is embedded as well as the ecological context including other species and the physical environment in which languages are embedded.

Few course book evaluation studies were conducted to understand whether Iranian EFL high school course books contain ecolinguistics representation. The results demonstrate that ecolinguistics, with its concern to the interaction between language and the environment, has received little attention within EFL textbooks in Iran. Only a few topics regarding ecolinguistics and language ecology are presented in the content of Iranian EFL high school books. This shows a weak reflection of ecolinguistics in environmental education.

The finding of the current study is in line with Nkwetisama’s (2011) study. After investigating the Cameroonian EFL/ESL teachers’ perspectives toward the application of ecolinguistics in the teaching classroom, he came to this conclusion that EFL/ESL teaching should both improve learners’ language proficiency as well as enhance environmentally friendly behaviours to activating ecolinguistics awareness among teachers and students.

The present findings seem to be consistent with the study of Zahoor and Janjua (2019). They investigated the environmental texts in English language textbooks used in Pakistan schools at the primary level. They found the selected textbooks lack ecopedagogical representation. Similarly, the results of the current study were in line with the studies conducted by Luardini and Sujiyani (2018). Emphasizing the lack of environmental topics and expressions on the materials being used to teach English in the Indonesia educational curriculum, Luardini and Sujiyani (2018) introduced some materials related to ecolinguistics in EFL classrooms of Junior High

School level in Indonesia. After the execution of the materials in teaching classes, they concluded that introducing teaching sources relating to environmental linguistic expressions leads to meaningful teaching and learning process. Zerrouqi et al. (2016) studied textbooks in Moroccan middle schools and argued that the textbooks did not include ecolinguistics topics to provide learners understanding about the dangers of pollution and to boost students' awareness about nature and environmental issues.

Despite the growing interest in research in the theoretical aspect of ecolinguistics, a few studies have been conducted to investigate the representation of ecolinguistics in language teaching or in developing materials for teaching English (e.g., Ben Brahim, 2002; El-Moussaouy et al., 2014; Ghouati, 2012; Gürsoy, 2010). Rajendra Kumar Dash (2019) concluded that ecolinguistics is an ever-emerging field of study. When ecolinguistic practices are found to have enhanced the quality of living, this new branch of linguistics has fulfilled the long-felt need for a discipline that can study the pivotal role of linguistics to affect or safeguard the ecology and ensure environmental justice (Dash 2019: 383).

However, to date, very few environmental content analyses have effectively scrutinized the role of ecolinguistics in Iranian EFL textbooks.

## Conclusion

Ecological linguistics is an essential tool that should be used to supplement the EFL textbooks. It includes various issues and resources that if presented to the students and explained by the teachers could raise the students' awareness towards nature and ecology. As the world is under the influence of destructive factors such as the greenhouse effect, climate change, and different types of pollutions, educators need to utilize ecolinguistics in the educational system and to synchronize ourselves with it. The analysis of the book evaluation data allows us to draw some important conclusions regarding the reflection of environmental problems in English textbooks in Iran. The findings of the current study revealed that only a few topics are discussed in all six English textbooks. Therefore, environmental problems are not adequately included in Iranian English textbooks to support the pedagogical purposes of EE in the educational system to help students realize the authenticity of the connection that maintains human to nature. The topics of English high school textbooks are limited to three issues of the weather, saving nature, and renewable energy. Thus, ELT textbooks planners in command of combining EE in Iran English textbooks give not much consideration to the textbooks. It could be concluded that an exclusive revision needs to be done to improve EE in the books and increase consciousness rising regarding the appreciation of global, national, and regional ecological concerns. Iranian students have to know different types of environmental hazards which endanger not only their lives but also the whole globe. Being focused on historical or fictional topics to learn the English language, Iranian students may neglect to acknowledge the value of life and overlook the challenging environmental issues which may challenge their lives in the future.

## Pedagogical Implications

The results of the present study in the Iranian context shows that high school EFL textbooks are available tools for the improvement of ecolinguistics, the employment of which requires a suitable education in all schooling grades to permit children, adolescents, and adults belief towards environmental problems and to develop their behaviours and lifestyle decisions towards the environment. In light of the findings of the present study, it was understood that some principles have to inspire Iranian decision-makers to adapt EE to the international pedagogical standards: a) to set the stage of EE based on environmental education, learners, and educators, b) to establish specific guidelines for the content to be combined in EE learning, and c) to implement professional growth for teachers to become competent environmental educators. Authors and publishers should employ the advantage of academic inquiries of ecolinguistics representation for collecting materials in their books. Consequently, the findings of this study will also have practical implications in the verification of continual national arrangements to complete EE. Moreover, educators should pay more attention to an English language teaching curriculum that incorporates demonstration of structured and discrete ecolinguistics programmes based on a logical methodology, pedagogical material, the ecolinguistics preparation programme for teachers, and teaching aids. Furthermore, it is recommended to examine students' workbooks and teacher's guides.

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# Booker T. Washington's Thoughts on Education and Their Relevance in Contemporary Educational System in India

*Dnyandeve Namdev More\**

“I would be helping in a more substantial way by assisting in the laying of the foundation of the race through a generous education of the hand, head and heart”.

**- Booker T. Washington**

## Abstract

The present paper unveils Booker T. Washington's thoughts on education and their relevance in the contemporary educational system in India. Education is the most powerful tool which changes our life, society and ultimately country. A proper education moulds an individual's character and makes his/her life better by inculcating moral values, intelligence, creativity and skills. It shows the way how to live and behave in society with dignity. It strengthens an individual's head, hand and heart. Booker T. Washington, a renowned African-American educationist, dedicated his entire life for the empowerment of the coloured people of America through the means of education. His educational model proposes industrial and technical education, agricultural education and training, vocational education, skill based knowledge, moral values, etc.

**Keywords:** Vocational education, Industrial training, Agricultural education, Skills, Empowerment, Employment, Moral values, Upliftment, Practical knowledge

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Education is the most effective tool for transforming the lives of men from darkness to light, ignorance to knowledge and irrational to rational. Evidently, it is the most powerful weapon with which we can change our life, society and ultimately country. Dr. Yogesh Singh, a well-known scholar, in his famous book, *History of Indian Education System* (2007), aptly remarks: "Society is dynamic: it grows and decays, springs up again with renewed and stronger élan and vitality, permeating into the entire social edifice of which education is an important part" (Singh 2). As, we know, education certainly gives an eyesight-view to man to inquire into the world applying rational thinking. A proper education moulds all round development of personality and makes life better by inculcating moral values, intelligence, creativity and skills among them. It shows the way how to live and behave in society with dignity. It strengthens an individual's head, hand and heart. It is the only panacea to curb all evils in society and bring political, social, spiritual, cultural and economic changes in it. Professor Kimberly A. Goyette, in her masterpiece, *Education in America* (2017), summarizes the alpha and omega of the essence of modern education system as: The main purpose of the institution of education is to prepare young members of a society for their adult roles in that society. Two ways that youths are prepared for these adult roles are through socialization and through sorting or stratification (Goyette 6).

Booker T. Washington (1856-1915), a renowned African-American educationist, dedicated his whole life for the betterment and empowerment of the coloured people of America through the means of education. He established the Tuskegee Institute (which is recognized a world famous educational institute in America today) to educate the coloured people in the southern part of America which resembles the great work of what Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, a well-known social reformist, did in India for the education of masses. His fundamental work in education is quite exemplary and applicable in the contemporary educational system in India. It is a milestone in World history in general and African-American history in particular. Hence, in this paper an honest attempt has been made to explore Booker T. Washington's thoughts on education and their relevance in the contemporary educational system in India.

Ranked among the best autobiographies in World Literature, Booker T. Washington's *Up from Slavery* (1901) documents his personal achievements especially in the noble field of education. It records his struggle for education, his generous efforts for providing education to the coloured, his work as a teacher, educator and founder of the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. An in depth study of Washington's theory of education makes us realise that it can serve as a guide to Indian educationalists and policy makers in order to reform the Indian educational system. Washington consciously negates the age-old system of education which has no potential to meet the present needs of employability and suggests a suitable and effective model of education. He insists the need of practical knowledge rather than theoretical. He points out that teaching theory, without practical experience

and exposure, makes the student handicapped. He strongly opposes the idea of “mere book learning” which is not efficacious to inculcate skills and values. His idea of practical education was an imperative input in the field of education which is the need of the hour.

As we know, education has potential to bring about changes in an individual’s behaviour and livelihood and here one can witness tremendous changes in the livelihood of the African-American community. Washington advocates the educational policy of Samuel Armstrong, his teacher and mentor and founder of the Hampton Institute (a reputed educational institute in America), who stresses the need of teaching practical knowledge related to day-to-day life activities (Simkin, *Spartacus Educational*). He endorses that there is a dire need to teach pupils common manners in life like how to comb hair properly, keep their hands, faces and cloths clean, proper use of the tooth-brush, importance of bath and eating in a proper way. To quote him: “We wanted to teach the students how to bathe, how to care for their teeth and clothing.... What to eat, and how to eat it properly and how to care for their rooms” (Washington 97). To teach these things are of utmost importance for the coloured people and not for the upper class strata of society. To them education is not a top priority. Alan Schroeder, in his book, entitled, *Booker T. Washington: Educator and Racial Spokesman* rightly observes: “In the South America, even for the upper-class strata, education was not a priority” (Schroeder 11).

Washington underlines the importance of moral values in human life. Hence, he insists the need of inclusion of the life and path breaking works of great personalities in the curricula of schools and colleges. He frankly admits that what he is today is due to Samuel Armstrong who motivated him and many others for moulding their personalities. He expounds that such liberal education is the need of the hour rather reading books and having costly apparatus only. To quote him: “There is no education which one can get from books and costly apparatus that is equal to that which can be gotten from contact with great men and women. Instead of studying books so constantly, how I wish that our schools and colleges might learn to study men and things!” (Washington 51)

What is special about Washington’s theory of education is his down-to-earth practical and humanistic approach. For him, education is not a matter of ‘mere book learning’ and having costly apparatus like laptops and smart phones but it is a matter of knowing higher and noble things in life by studying men and things around us. Hence, he appeals to read men rather than books which inculcate moral values.

Washington insists teaching the ‘Art of living’ which one cannot learn from text-books. He wanted to provide for education which teaches how to live and how to work. Hence, he designs some field based activities in the curriculum. For instance, he asks his pupils to visit coloured families and prepare a detailed report on their problems and measures to be undertaken so that they might live a better life. It exhorts students to learn from the real life of ex-slaves. He asserts that education

is not “a thing apart from life- not a ‘system’, nor a philosophy; it is direct teaching how to live and how to work” (16). Actually, students are proud of book learning with the false assumption that they will become knowledgeable by reading huge books only. But such bookish knowledge in the form of mugging, as Washington points out, fails to solve problems in day-to-day life. He expounds that learning should motivate learners to think and acquire skills and practical knowledge through real life experience.

Washington emphasizes the need of industrial and technical education in addition to academic, religious and spiritual education. He propounds that students, with whatever financial ability, must acquire knowledge and training in some industry. To quote him: “We wanted to give them such a practical knowledge of someone industry, together with the spirit of industry, thrift, and economy, that they would be sure of knowing how to make a living after they had left us. We wanted to teach them to study actual things instead of mere books alone” (Washington 97).

The Tuskegee Institute resolves to mete out industrial training in terms of required skills and knowledge for industry. He believes that skill-oriented education is an essential part of higher learning in the country. Hence, the training in terms of bricks making, preparing furniture and vehicles like wagons, carts and buggies as well as farming, sewing, dairying, gardening, fruit-growing, bee-culture and poultry-raising have to be provided to students. For him, it is compulsory on the part of students to work at least half of each day at some industry which helps them start business immediately after completion of their education. Resultantly, scores of trainees mastered various trades and starts industry in many parts of the South. Some of them start small business like laundry, dairy farm, truck garden, garages, etc. Subsequently, these coloured students were found useful by larger society and their work was recognised and honoured accordingly. This is what the real value of education is.

Washington endorses the need of agricultural education and training considering the fact that eighty five per cent of the coloured people in America depend upon agriculture as their main business for livelihood. So, he resolves to give top priority to agricultural education and accordingly, reserves one section of the land of the Tuskegee Institute for agricultural cultivation. Resultantly, students cultivate the land with hard labour and get yields at one level, and knowledge and skills to train farmers, at another. They utilise their knowledge to show people how to put new energy and ideas into farming in order to increase produce. They also boost their confidence by giving moral support and technical assistance. This is real application of education in actual life.

Washington gives top priority to vocational education and endorses that it should be introduced as a compulsory subject for slow and steady development of students. It teaches skills in addition to character building, personal hygiene, mannerisms and dignity of labour. He advocates incorporating various course modules of different disciplines of knowledge like agriculture, mechanics, commerce and management,

domestic service, mathematics, laundering, trades, languages, etc. in curricula. It incentivizes them to do work and be independent. It provides students with job opportunities in various industries at one level and helps them start business at another. For instance, Mr. Campbell and Mr. Adams, alumni of the Tuskegee Institute start their own business and become well-known entrepreneurs. It is needless to say that such learning outcome based education is imperative in the contemporary Indian educational system to make it more sustainable.

Washington's concept of ideal education consists of equal parts of vocational training and book learning, a kind of blended learning, which is required for a specific trade or craft like carpentry, agriculture, engineering, medicine, printing, shoemaking, architecture, etc. To him, vocational education is the perfect and suitable means for the upliftment of students, fellow citizens and ultimately country. However, W. E. B. Du Bois, a noted critic, comments that Washington's educational model is harmful as it will keep coloured Americans a "laboring class" and promote social segregation and political suppression. To me, it is very difficult to agree with his comment as his ideas are really beneficial to get required skills and knowledge for employment. His idea of inclusion of vocational and industrial skills helped the coloured carve a niche in a racial-biased society.

Washington strongly feels that the Central Government should make a special provision of financial assistance for the general education of his people in the annual budget. However, neither the Central Government nor the states have made any financial provision for their education. Hence, he regrets their indifferent and callous attitude towards the education of the coloured people. He attacks: "Even as a youth, and later in manhood, I had the feeling that it was cruelly wrong of the central government...to fail to make some provision for the general education of our people in addition to what the states might do, so that the people would be the better prepared for the duties of citizenship" (Washington 69).

It is the prime responsibility of the government to provide free and compulsory education to all and sundry irrespective of colour, region, caste, etc. However, the Central as well as State governments in America have not taken it seriously. The condition of India in terms of education is not different as successive governments in the journey of more than seven decades of independence have failed to provide special attention towards the education of masses. Washington urges that the government should seriously think about it and here lies the relevance of his thoughts on education in the contemporary educational system in India.

Washington accords top priority to physical labour which helps make students self-independent and self-reliant. He prescribes physical labour as compulsory for every student without which degree will not be awarded. He framed a strict rule that no student, no matter how much money he may be able to command, is permitted to go through school without doing manual labour. Its prime objective is to teach not only the utility of labour but its 'beauty and dignity'. It inspires students to love work

for its own sake. He teaches students the latest and best methods of labour. In the curriculum, field-based activity is mandatory in which every graduate is sent to field to know the importance of labour. He wants to relate the subject matter to the real experiences of students. Resultantly, many students learn to love work and construct many excellent buildings. One of the graduates cultivates an acre of land and produces two hundred and sixty-six bushels of sweet potatoes with hard work.

Washington's model of industrial education and training, agricultural education and training, vocational education, to teach moral values and the art of living is quite relevant in the contemporary education system in India at large. Washington incorporated this type of courses in curricula before one and half centuries ago, whereas, the Indian education system has from primary to higher education ignored to teach these life skills and importance of physical labour. There is an urgent need to focus on vocational education in addition to moral values which contribute enormously to the upliftment of the individual as well as society at large.

Indian youth is not galvanized and groomed to undertake business, start ups like American graduates because sufficient industrial education and training is not provided to them. As a result, the problem of employment is increasing day-by-day in India. Every student in India is eager to get government job but such opportunities are not available in proportion to the number of aspirants. Hence, highly educated students with highest degrees like PhDs, MBAs, etc. stand in the line of job seekers even for the post of clerks and peons. This is a grim picture of the Indian education system which leads us to feel the urgent need to revisit our ideas of education and Washington's educational model is the solution for this.

True, education means inculcating moral values, positive thinking, dignity of labour, helping others, the idea of giving back to society and so on. However, the Indian education system demands securing good marks and grades in examinations rather promoting learners to learn skill based knowledge. It is an open secret that the rat-race of securing good marks in examinations rarely reveals students' talent. To make the situation worse, even contemporary textbooks do not mention how curricula are applicable in practical life. Hence, Washington's practical and vocational courses to be executed in the Indian education system are useful to bring about positive changes in our academic and day-to-day lives.

In a nutshell, Washington, in his educational model, proposes industrial and technical education, agricultural education and training, vocational education, art of living, physical labour, skill-based knowledge, moral values, etc. (Reeser). This is the reason why American students earn money while seeking education and get employment after completion of degrees, whereas, their Indian counterparts fight for job opportunities even after securing highest degrees. Hence, Washington's educational model is quite relevant and applicable and needs to be adopted and executed in the contemporary educational system in India to bring about radical reforms in it.

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# Social Insight, Stigma and Social Suffering in Contemporary Society: Insights from Regional Tuberculosis Centre, Pokhara, Nepal

*Prakash Upadhyay\**

## Abstract

Still in this era of nanotechnology, tuberculosis is a stigma in traditional societies, consequently the people infected with tuberculosis suffer from two-fold experiences – suffering from the disease and the social suffering. This paper tries to assess the social insight on tuberculosis and the suffering of tuberculous infected people in Nepal. The study method was quantitative and qualitative. Interview schedule, P-scale and case study guidelines were used to obtain primary data from 35 respondents. Social insight on tuberculosis as the most stigmatized and discriminated disease has resulted in the intensification of belief on faith healer, loss of income, job discontinuity, social restriction, mental stress, discrimination by family, and treatment delay. Social restriction is stern for female and elderly people, but high-caste Hindu has fewer restrictions. Restriction increased with the increase in age. The sociocultural construction and the community instituted meanings and insights on tuberculosis as a ‘polluted stigma’ has regulated the clinical realities and added to the social suffering of the infected. The stigma attached to tuberculosis should be regarded as a biosocial and psycho-cultural phenomenon that requires the recognition and adoption of biological and sociocultural lenses of culture and health in health policy planning.

**Keywords:** Medical anthropology, Socially constructed, Caste-ridden, Infodemic

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## Background

As one of the top ten causes of death and the leading cause from a single infectious agent that killed 1.5 million people worldwide in 2018, Tuberculosis (TB) caused by

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bacteria *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* is a top infectious killer disease which effects lungs and causes pulmonary tuberculosis which can affect intestine, bones, joints, lymph glands, skin and body tissues. According to WHO (2011) the symptoms of active tuberculosis of the lung are coughing, sometimes with sputum or blood, chest pains, weakness, weight loss, fever and night sweats. Tuberculosis is treatable with a six-month course of antibiotics. GTR (2019) affirms that an estimated 10 million people fell ill with tuberculosis worldwide in 2018 including 5.7 million men, 3.2 million women and 1.1 million children. Ending the tuberculosis by 2030 is among the health targets of the Sustainable Development Goals. According to NTP (2018), tuberculosis ranked as the sixth leading cause of death in Nepal, killed 6000 people in 2018. During 2018, 31764 tuberculosis cases were registered including all forms of cases, which includes 30,957 cases (new and relapse). Out of total registered cases 11400 (36%) were female and 20364 (64%) were male. Each day 123 new TB cases are reported.

Park (2009) confirmed that following the improvements in living conditions and the development of antibiotics, the prevalence of tuberculosis fell dramatically in industrialized countries attributed mainly to improvements in the quality of life. However, in the 1980s, the number started to rise again mainly in least developed countries. For Yang and Kong (2015), the clinical manifestations of tuberculosis are quite variable and depend on host factors such as age, immune status, coexisting diseases, immunization with BCG (*Bacillus Calmette Guerin*), and microbial factors such as virulence of the organism and predilection for specific tissues. Beyond medical factors, there are diverse social factors liable for higher tuberculosis risk that includes many of non-medical factors such as poor quality of life, underprivileged housing, homelessness, poverty, tobacco use, alcohol/drug abuse, under nutrition, lack of education and awareness and large families etc. Embedded with social experience of illness, social insight is the social awareness and understanding of the origins and meaning, feelings, behaviour, motives and knowledge related to any disease. Conrad and Barker (2010) posit that medical sociologists use constructionist theory to interpret social experience of illness which holds that individuals and groups produce their own conceptions of reality, and knowledge itself is product of social dynamics and illness can reshape individual/community identity.

Embedded with community's sociocultural norms, social insight perceives tuberculosis as a stigmatized and discriminated disease. The lenses of medical anthropology acknowledge, understand, and question the sociocultural norms, beliefs and stigma embedded with health, illness and health behaviours. Upadhyay (2016) affirms that sociocultural norms and beliefs entrenched to human cultural discourses and institutions are expressed through diverse taboos and activities that shape how people perceive health and disease. Pedestal on *social suffering approach*, Farmer (2003) substantiates that structural violence and social suffering construct the social relations of everyday life, the causes of suffering as collectively rooted social experience with the close linkage of personal problems with societal problems. The

*interpretive approach* by Kleinman (1978) affirms that disease is not an entity but an explanatory model. Disease belongs to culture and culture is not only a means of representing disease but is essential to its very constitution as a human reality involving interaction of biology, social practices and culturally constituted frames of meanings in different contexts, through which clinical realities are constructed. For Good (1994), that is: how meaning and interpretive practices interact with social, psychological, and physiological processes to produce distinctive forms of illness and illness trajectories. Meanings and symbols attached to symptoms compress a reflection and, at the same time, both motivate experiences of illness, social relations and the social stigma.

Goffman (1963) has conceptualized *stigma* as a deeply discreditable attribute of an individual or a group. Parker and Aggleton (2003) affirm and acknowledge the influence of social interactions used to create and maintain social control and to produce and reproduce social inequality. For Scrambler and Hopkins (1986) overt acts of discrimination is often called *enacted stigma* that denotes inflicting blemishes and suffering on people who are regarded as undesirable by the society. Dodor (2008) posits that tuberculosis stigmatization may be both real and perceived e.g. in Ghana individuals with tuberculosis are banned from attending public gatherings. Stigma towards tuberculosis may result in delays in seeking treatment, lower treatment compliance, and family members keeping cause of death secret allowing the disease to spread further. Dimitrova (2006) informs that in Russia tuberculosis patients' fear of unemployment is a major obstacle to patients seeking care and a reason for delays in diagnosis. People are afraid of losing their jobs, and that's why they don't seek help. For Alterado (2013), stigma contributes to suffering from illness and may delay presentation and treatment leading to prolonged transmission of infectious diseases, drug resistance or complications that increase treatment costs for this treatable health problem. Dhingra and Khan (2010) observed widespread stigma at society level with 60% of the patients hiding their disease from friends and neighbours in New Delhi.

In Nepal it is a general belief that tuberculosis is not curable, and people do not seek treatment so that to avoid shame and unfair treatment from the people living around them. Aryal et al. (2012) argue that social stigma is a barrier for successful care of people because tuberculosis is considered as a filthy disease, a death punishment or as affecting guilty people that impair self-esteem, bring shame or embarrassment with less respect from others in the society. Banstola (2012) affirms that accessing DOTS (Directly Observed Treatment) strategy medications can be particularly difficult for women, the poor and backward caste people in Nepal. Baral et al. (2007) opine that the causes of self-discrimination of tuberculosis patients include the fear of transmitting tuberculosis, and avoiding gossip and potential discrimination. For Andrew and Norris (2010), discriminatory misconceptions lead to stigmatization of tuberculosis that hinder tuberculosis control and increase diagnostic delay and treatment noncompliance. Cremer et al. (2015) squabble that

consequences of stigma include low self-esteem, insults, ridicule, discrimination, social exclusion, and isolation leading to a decreased quality of life and social status, non-disclosure, and difficulties with treatment compliance and adherence.

The stigma is worse than the disease, and healthcare providers may unintentionally reinforce stigma, as those with tuberculosis are often perceived as difficult or otherwise undesirable. Despite this, anthropological studies on relationship between tuberculosis, stigma and suffering and ramifications on treatment are rare, and the similar efforts to decrease stigma surrounding have been minimally effective. Medicine may work effectively to treat physical pain but for the treatment of psychological pain (a subset of suffering); it is necessary to contemplate on sociocultural dimensions. As the social insights and suffering from tuberculosis are the outcome of cultural understandings hence medical anthropological perusal is relevant to understand the stigma of tuberculosis, so as to develop strategies to minimize the effects on patients. Lönnroth et al. (2009) affirm that addressing the social determinants of health is a shared responsibility across disease programmes and other stakeholders within and beyond the health sector. For Dahal (2013), to deepen the understanding of tuberculosis-related stigma and to develop improved theories to explain its causes or mechanisms in least developed countries, it is necessary to understand the mechanisms, then we will be in a better position to develop strategies to sustainably reduce tuberculosis related stigma.

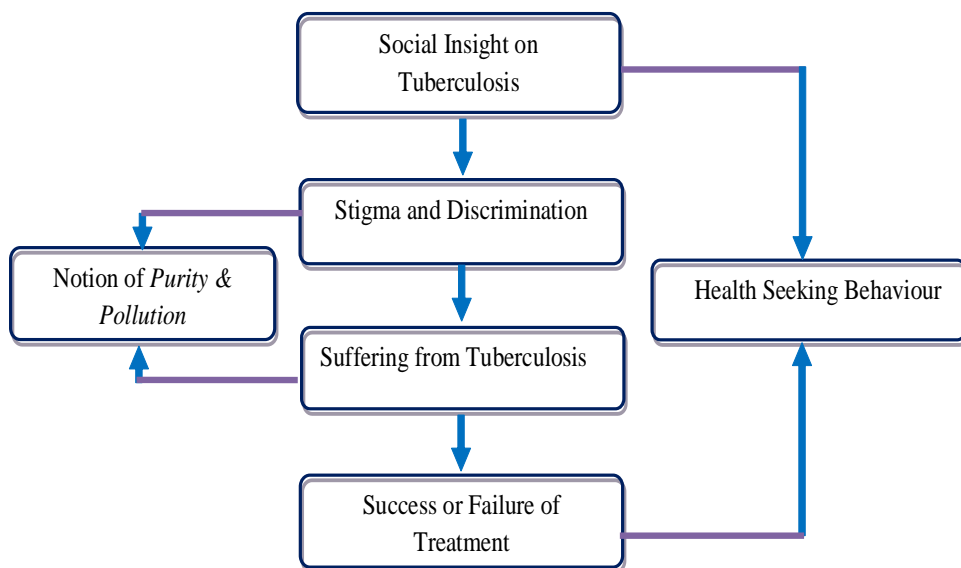
## **Objective and Methods**

The key objective of this paper is to explore the social insight on tuberculosis and the suffering of tuberculous infected people in Nepal. The primary data was congregated from 35 registered tuberculosis infected people of Regional Tuberculosis Centre, Pokhara, Nepal. Nature of data was quantitative and qualitative obtained through primary sources viz. interview schedule, case study and participation scale (P-scale). Interview schedule included 45 questions which explored data on social insights, stigma and suffering. Case study guidelines included different dimensions of discrimination and distress.

For controlling the validity and reliability, a generic assessment checklist was designed on the magnitude of stigma and discriminations related to tuberculosis and pre-test was consummated at about 10% of sample size at one another tuberculosis center - Shisuwa Primary Health Care Centre of Kaski district, Nepal that assisted in maintaining consistency of reliability across time, items and respondents. This facilitated in assisting validation of measurement tools so that to represent the variables they are intended to. Ethical approval in the form of verbal consent was obtained from each respondent before administering the interview and they were convinced of the confidentiality of their identity. The field study was conducted during September 3 to 29, 2019.

## Conceptual Framework of the Study

Community's social insights on tuberculosis produce stigma and discrimination for curative tuberculosis, consequently stigma and suffering become grimmer than tuberculosis. Building on anthropologist Douglas (1966) notion of *purity and pollution*, insolent social insight considering tuberculosis as a *pollution (impure)*, stigma, and the subsequent social discriminations contribute to social sufferings. Consequently, the people infected with tuberculosis try to conceal their health problem which leads to relapse of cases and alter the health seeking behaviour resulting in the treatment failure, death or severe future health problems. The conceptual framework of the study illustrates in aspect.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

## Discernment on Tuberculosis

Of the 35 tuberculosis infected people registered in Regional Tuberculosis Centre Pokhara, 37 percent are *Janajati* (ethnic groups) followed by 29 percent *Kshetri*, 23 percent low-caste *Dalit* and 11 percent high-caste *Brahmin*. The majority 77 percent tuberculosis infected people are Hindus, 20 percent Buddhists and 3 percent Christians. About 54 percent infected are less than 30-years age, followed by 31 percent between 30-60 years and 14 percent above 60 years. The minimum age and maximum age is 14 years and 72 years respectively. Around 54.3 percent infected are male and rest are female (45.7%), 51 percent are married, 40 percent single and the rest are widow (er). About 33 percent tuberculosis infected are the professionals like teachers, officers, clerks, bus/taxi drivers, carpenters and ironsmiths, 29 percent are housewives, 23 percent students, and the rest are the farmers.

The preponderance 83 percent infected contemplate tuberculosis as an infectious disease followed by 11 percent considering tuberculosis as a lung disease caused by bacteria and only 6 percent regarded tuberculosis as a general disease. For 77 percent infected, persistence cough for a month is a major sign and symptom of tuberculosis. Other infected perceived continuous fever, haemoptysis (coughing up of blood), chest pain, sweating and anorexia (loss of appetite) as the major symptoms of tuberculosis. About 75 percent professed that tuberculosis is caused by bacteria, 19 percent regarded poor hygiene and 6 percent infected took virus as the cause of tuberculosis which is incorrect.

About 71 percent infected hold the notion that tuberculosis could be transmitted through droplet, and the rest perceive eating together, using fomites and hand shaking as the major transmitter of tuberculosis. Most of them had the right answer and the only few had wrong perception (eating together, using fomites, hand shaking) regarding the mode of transmission. Around 67 percent infected had a misconception that tuberculosis is a hereditary disease. About 94 percent were convinced that tuberculosis can be treated by drugs and only 6 percent had the misapprehension that tuberculosis can be cured by worshipping god and by seeking the help of shamans and faith healers (*Dhami, Jhankri and Lama* in Nepali lexis) which validate tuberculosis patients' belief on supernatural power. Around 40 percent infected were convinced that there is the availability of traditional healers in their community for the treatment of tuberculosis. Belief on faith healers is illogical social insight that leads patients to visit a traditional faith healer which delays the medical treatment, aggravates the tuberculosis stigma and leads to severity of the disease.

A major bulk i.e. 64 percent infected were convinced that they can get treatment at any DOTS center. With multiple responses, about 86 percent of them insisted that tuberculosis can be prevented by avoiding smoking followed by 37 percent who focused on the use of face mask, 31 percent stated BCG vaccination and 20 percent focused on to get the treatment immediately. Around 71 percent of them had the easily accessibility of health workers as the source of information, the rest of the patients had the media sources like radio, television, and the relatives/friends as the main sources of information on tuberculosis.

## **Social Insight, Stigmatization and Suffering**

With multiple responses, around 86 percent infected acknowledged that social insight on tuberculosis is such that it is the most discriminated and polluted ailment in the community. According to Douglas (1966) the concept of *Purity* and *Pollution* exists in every society and pollution beliefs debar people from various kinds of social activities. The labeling of tuberculosis as a pollution or impure disease has structured the social insight on tuberculosis in Nepali society. Deleterious social insight regarding tuberculosis as a discriminatory sensitivity and disgrace has resulted in the subservience of the infected person, consequently for them tuberculosis is stained and similar to leprosy. It is chronic, bigoted, extortionate and the utmost stigmatized

disease in the society. This discriminatory social insight has determined the infected person's ability of making scientific judgements on tuberculosis. Hindu religion based cultural webbing of meanings associated to notions of pollution and purity has shaped the social insight on tuberculosis which is linked with fallacies, superstitions and unfriendly practices on tuberculosis. Socially constructed stigma of tuberculosis identified as unwanted by the community has led to stigmatization of tuberculosis and the resulting deflation of the infected based on a recognition of a difference on discrete characteristics of the infected person. About 81 percent patients sensed vacillation and humiliation owing to the embarrassing social insight on tuberculosis which is more social and cultural than biological.

Around 57 percent infected person's family members were infested from tuberculosis transmitted by the infected member that made the infected person feel remorseful of his disease. About 91 percent infected were living a dejected life due to the stigma attached to tuberculosis. Among those who had tuberculosis affliction, 65 percent had economic burden owing to the direct and indirect cost of treatment, 59 percent were physically weak, and 41 percent accredited mental stress along with social disgrace, discrimination by the family members, disturbance in family and marital relationship, pessimism, social distancing, and restricted occupational opportunities, unexciting life and travel restriction. Further, the tuberculosis stigma has hampered the income, daily life and has added manifold problems in the lives of infected patient that points to an association between tuberculosis stigma and variables such as monthly income, occupation, mental stress, discrimination and suffering. About 77 percent tuberculosis infected had direct cost of Nepali Rupees (NRs) 10,000 in private hospital/clinic. This health service they can get free of cost in government DOTS centre but due to the lack of awareness they paid the direct cost of preliminary treatment in private hospital and clinic. But they were ultimately referred to government DOTS for the treatment of tuberculosis. About 66 percent infected incurred indirect cost of NRs 15000 and 34 percent had NRs 15000 for getting treatment at DOTS centre. The indirect cost includes travelling cost, accommodation, snacks and meal cost, fruits, etc.

Bourdieu (2000) asserts that suffering is the collective and individual human problems associated with life conditions shaped by powerful social forces or the state of severe distress associated with events that threaten the intactness of the person. For the tuberculosis infected, in a constricted sense, suffering is a physical pain and mental/emotional pain in wide sense with distress, sorrow, misery, grief, affliction and discomfort, fear of transmission of tuberculosis to family members, economic burden, stigma and prejudice.

As a tuberculosis victim, I left my job and started to live an impoverished lonely life, my girlfriend left me. I have not participated in social activities. I am impoverished, distressed and created distance from the society that has added to my physical and mental suffering. (Distress of a tuberculosis patient)

About 51 percent tuberculosis infected patients were suffering from tuberculosis since more than 6 months and 49 percent were tormented by tuberculosis for less than 6 months. The minimum and maximum suffering months from tuberculosis were two months and thirty-six months. Since the culture and society is organized and influenced by the issues of health, disgrace and prejudice, the tuberculosis infected were stigmatized by their family member, neighbours, friends and relatives. False notion and cultural fallacies on tuberculosis exacerbated their suffering. Most of them experienced the stigma due to the filthy (polluted) disease tuberculosis – as ascribed by their community.

In my journey of suffering from tuberculosis, I am undergoing DOTS treatment. My mother-in-law criticizes tuberculosis as polluted. In my community there is a saying that tuberculosis is filthy due to the sin of previous birth. I did not share my agony; I am a silent sufferer. (A housewife experiencing tuberculosis)

Social disgrace attached to tuberculosis and the resulting restriction on social participation has added to the despair of tuberculosis infected. Around 74 percent of them had significant restriction, 23 percent had experienced mild restriction and 3 percent had moderate restriction on social participation. Participation restriction differs for different age groups. Around 64 percent elderly people above the age of 60 years experienced more restrictions on social participation which depicts that restriction on participation increases with the increase in age. With more access to media and education, young adults have fewer restrictions on social participation. Females have severe restriction on participation than male. About 33 percent female patients had participation restriction compared to 21 percent males. There is a variation in participation restriction by caste and ethnicity consequently 30.8 percent *Janajati* had severe restriction on participation, 30 percent for *Kshetri* followed by 25 percent for *Dalit* and 12.5 percent for *Brahmin*. The high caste Hindu *Brahmin* had less social restriction than other ethnic group. Except for treatment, the tuberculosis infected had restrictions on visit outside their village and neighborhood viz. market, public places as school, shops, offices, market and tea and coffee shops. Almost half of the infected people had restriction on equal opportunity in taking part in casual recreational and social activities as sports, meetings and in visiting people in the community, religious/community affairs, on helping neighbour/friends, and relatives. There were restrictions on meeting people, to learn new things as other normal people do, and to start/maintain a long term relationship with life partner owing to the stigmatization related to tuberculosis as a grubby disease.

Ascription of tuberculosis as a polluted disease, ensuing stigma and social sufferings have made patients life worthless and has forced them to conceal their health problem that may delay the treatment phase and the history of illness. Connotations and proscriptions attached to tuberculosis has enthused the experiences of illness, social relations and the social stigma. The collectively rooted social relations

of everyday life and the suffering as an experience divulge the plight of tuberculosis patient and the violence of their human rights.

I do not share about my tuberculosis ailment to others due to fear what they will say. They will not allow me to stay in the community. Society's view on tuberculosis is extremely negative, discriminatory and against the human rights. I feel remorse for being a tuberculosis patient. (Anguish of a sufferer)

In a *caste-ridden* and *priest-ridden* Hindu society, discrimination by the community is due to the fear of the risk of infection and perceived links between tuberculosis and disgraceful behaviour and the perception that tuberculosis is pollution and a divine punishment of the previous life. This perception itself is the product of social dynamics and tuberculosis as filthy illness has reshaped individual and community's identity which is expressed through assorted taboos and activities that shape how people observe tuberculosis. False notion based socially constructed community norms, the disgrace of tuberculosis and the downgrading of tuberculosis patient have made stigma more dangerous than tuberculosis infection. Both *social stigma* (public perception of stigma) and *self-stigma* (infected persons' self-judgement and mortification) generate negative stereotypes and define tuberculosis infected people as different and prevent them from being seen as a normal human. Many infected people internalize the community enacted stigma as a sociocultural phenomenon that relegates, stigmatize and constrain their life chances consequently contributing to suffering in various ways that delay presentation and treatment leading to prolonged transmission of infectious agent, drug resistance or complications that increase treatment costs for this treatable health menace.

## Conclusion

The well-being of tuberculosis infected person is reliant on the perception of the sociocultural meanings of the infectious agent and disgrace attached to it that has led to discrediting community, restricted social interactions and detrimental impacts on diagnosis and treatment seeking behaviour. The orthodox sociocultural meanings of tuberculosis, dogmas and fallacies based socially constructed illogical social insight considering tuberculosis as the most perilous disease in the community has contributed to stigma, discrimination and suffering of the infected person. The sociocultural molds and meanings stemming from the notion of purity and pollution (tuberculosis as a polluted or impure disease) have shaped the local society that has deleteriously influenced health, well-being and human rights of the tuberculosis infected person.

Since the sociocultural constructions of health and the community's culturally established frames of meanings configure the clinical realities and standardize the ways in which the people experience and suffer from diseases, the tuberculosis stigma should be deliberated as a biosocial and psycho-cultural phenomenon requiring comprehension of biological and sociocultural lenses of culture and health. The dangerous and false information based *infodemic* fallacy on tuberculosis needs to be clogged by developing community ability to distinguish real information from the

false so that tuberculosis may be virtuously considered a normal macrobiotic phenomenon. Further, it is indispensable to consider sociocultural information in tuberculosis healthcare planning, policy making and programme implementation.

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## Uncle Evan from Swansea, Wales, Visits a Town in North Ontario

after the winter  
my storm-shaken house  
now under a blue slate sky  
the day winding down  
one grey jay calligraphs  
lines of pure poetry  
while her mate  
punctuates them  
"smart and brazen"  
I tell my uncle  
"and they're known  
to ruffle some feathers"  
sniffing the air  
he "tastes" freshly split maple  
looking into the sky  
into the silence that follows  
the two Whisky Jacks'  
boisterous departure  
Evan licks his lips  
summons the rise and fall  
of his Dylan Thomas imitation

*My ark sings in the sun  
At God speeded summer's end  
And the flood flowers now*

Evan's final retort: "See!"

– Neal Whitman\*

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## Silent Shadows

In her eerie light  
between clouds obscuring  
the moon sheds her beauty.  
Dancing across the trees  
shadows play a pantomime of intrigue.  
The intrigue grows loud  
shrieking - shrieking - growing louder  
the forest, deathly still reverberates,  
shriek - boom - shriek - boom,  
ghostly figures filter through trees  
pulsing slowly to the tune of terror.

Deep low moaning echoes  
overwhelm the shrieking shadows,  
moan - murmur - moan  
moaning - moaning - whining loudly,  
falling thumps agitate the forest floor,  
blackened leaves rustle - crunching down  
crunching under invisible feet,  
thud - thud - thud  
the thudding - rustling - crunching  
growing louder - harder - louder,  
brighter - pulsing brighter - glowing brighter

Shush!  
Shush!  
softening - slowing - silence  
Silence - silence - silence.

## Lost in Dimension

the austerity of the black hole  
jolted me out of my apathetic slumber,  
with the creation of dynamic information  
it pushes the credibility of truth.

for those who lock themselves into answers  
having a sensitive dependence on dogma  
new qualities are offered with Hopf bifurcations.

I sat tensely with a spell over my mind,  
finding parts of the harmonic proofs  
the music began to decay  
and tore mercilessly into the water.

defined by an idea of deconstruction  
I pondered,  
was this a coincidence with non-local effects  
which was self-similar scale-invariant  
and emitting a sensuous soft red haze?

pulsating with the reflection of mangroves in her eyes  
the warm air caressed my shouting,  
vacuous messages devoid of substance  
taunted this ethereal gypsy.

injustices of the soul  
echo, "Lament to a Silent Place",  
always the enigmatic imagery abounds.

my hand tightened around the sky  
in the unknown recesses of dimension seven  
as the isolated reaches of silence opened.

– Robert Maddox-Harle\*

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*\*Mr. Harle (aka Rob Harle) is an artist-poet from Rainbow Region, NSW, Australia.*

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## Let's Meet

Before the bananas ripe  
let's meet at least once

lest the fog dampen passion  
let's water our love

the sun is bright this morning  
and night's promising

let's meet and unfreeze winter  
of years, drink some wine

restore warmth of faith and hope  
and heal the breaches

without black goggles for seeing  
let's meet atleast once

## Who Cares?

Death hides in the body  
but who sees? it's obscure

living on the edge  
seeking space into swamp

they all talk about the sun  
swelling in the sky

and close eyes to the spider  
spinning waves on the ceiling

all alone, but who cares?  
suspicion and distance

like lovers they pretend  
to leave yet stay longer

dishing out luxuries  
showing off generosity

on the heart's fancy table  
waiting to welcome the guest

## No, I Won't

Depressed mount of sun  
and feeble supporting lines-  
will I die unknown?  
left rotting in the sand  
and the wind oozing foul smell?

I don't want the sun  
to miss my light and blame  
the night for writing  
the fate with wintry fingers  
licking the legs of scarecrow

they can't close their eyes  
to the images I brew  
for burying secrets  
against a dusty mirror  
against God's hidden errors

– Ram Krishna Singh\*

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*\*Prof. Singh, a renowned Indian English poet, has been writing for over four decades. Professionally, till the end of 2015, Professor of English (HAG) at IIT-ISM, Dhanbad, he has published more than 160 research articles, 175 book reviews and 46 books, including God Too Awaits Light (2017), Growing Within (2017), and Tainted With Prayers (2019). His haiku and tanka have been internationally read and appreciated. He lives in Dhanbad, Jharkhand, India. Email: [profrksingh@gmail.com](mailto:profrksingh@gmail.com); Webs: <https://rksinghpoet.blogspot.com>; <https://profrksingh.wordpress.com>*

## A Ray of Hope

On the arrival of that moment  
truth is now transpired,  
All those who endeavoured in favour of you  
have won and are to be guerdoned.

Those birds have flown away  
leaving us all alone,  
The seeds of hope that they planted  
are now blooming here.

Though Mother Nature is performing a hard reset  
with God's grace it is growing,  
It eagerly awaits for the moment  
when you will shower blessing.

The fragrance is now spread everywhere  
it has become an apple of everyone's eye,  
It's now a long desired wish to celebrate  
just waiting for your holy presence.

– Rimpi Sonowal\*

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## Reconciliation

Your splendour the pageants celebrated,  
Your face the glossy-print worlds enticed.  
With tilted smiles and gliding gait  
You wore that face you knew so well.

Enraptured judges crown your charms,  
Your reflections on glasses delighted you.  
But time's decades have unyieldingly flitted,  
Engrafting its homage on your facial feats.

Drifting in seconds, minutes, hours into days,  
Slithering into months, crafting its cruel artistry  
Mimicking geographic rivulets, ravine and gorges,  
Besmirching that celebrated face you knew so well.

Time's seasons plunder unrestrained, unyielding,  
Yet subtle, until this face which now reflects back  
Barely identifiable to you and wooers of yore,  
Of the face you thought you had always known.

The road to life's journey is paved with reconciliations,  
The unsavory route those before you have wandered.  
Though this face leaves you baffled, staring, wondering,  
Time's deal is done; the faces must now make peace

– Clara Ijeoma Osuji\*

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## The Saree

The saree which I wear  
Is made of fibres of my joys and sorrows  
experiments of my  
Indignation and agony,  
despondency and detachment.

This saree is a song  
of my love and loss.  
The end if my saree  
is to fasten my discontent.

On the borders of my saree, bloom the  
flowers of sadness.  
When I move out with this saree, image of a loom floats in my consciousness.

While wearing this saree, dreams must have poured out in its  
form if colours  
many wishes must have taken shapes,  
a deep interest in art  
must have moved his tireless hands.

Do you know  
how much love, intimacy and emotion one has to pour down to produce a saree  
of your choice?

This saree is made of fibres of my sorrows and joy, my happiness and sadness.

## Pravasini, What Are You Doing These Days?

Pravasini,

What are you doing these days?

your birth is not

such an important event

the night you were born

many children would have taken birth on many places on this earth -

Australia, Africa, Asia

North America, South America, Europe and Argentina.

They must have cried like you in Summer, Winter and Rains, inside nursing homes, government hospitals, homes, huts and igloos.

Pravasini,

do you think your survival is an accident?

What are you doing this fading afternoon of  
13th March 2019?

This afternoon is like

a white carbon paper

and on its surface are

written some letters

in black ink.

Have you read what is written on it?

Does it preserve the signature if time which  
you want to write once again?

Pravasini,

what are you doing these days ?

Do you think you depended on someone or the other always,

to begin with your mother, then the members of your family

and its environment,

on your own shadow

enchanted by love

God's loveliest gift on earth?

Pravasini,

so I ask you

what are you

doing these days ?

## On the Top

They are all male.  
Among them one is my Father,  
One is my brother,  
Another one is my husband

Someone is my lover  
Others are my blood relations  
And my friends  
Who trust and love me.

In fact, fathers are males  
But they belong to  
A divine group,  
Brothers are males  
But they are armours of protections.

But do not ask me about husband,  
When he asserts his manliness  
He becomes a demon  
In whose hands  
You become a toy  
With which he plays at will  
And destroys it finally.  
There your love sets buried  
Along with the dry flowers  
In an utterly lovely and helpless  
Moment of your life.

No,  
I have no complaint against a male  
Not I have to go in a procession  
Against him holding a placard  
But I want to distance myself  
From his inhumanity  
And ignore his arrogance.

One day I failed  
To recognise an intimate face  
Who went away  
From the dark room of my life  
After all the images are erased,

And in whose love  
I remain enchanted  
For aeons and aeons,  
Before whom I surrender  
The rest of my life,  
Whom I love  
From the depth of my soul.  
But who is that Soul?  
A male or female?

Nor male nor female -  
Only a pure soul:  
But why this doubt?  
I love a male soul  
Want to live again and again  
In poetry and epic  
On the top of the beauty of  
Sculpture of poetry  
With alphabets of emotion,  
Want to live as I wish  
On the peak of my consciousness,  
The life of Ardhnarishwar,  
Half male and half female.  
I want to remain away  
From ego and arrogance of a male,  
The contented life of a poet,  
A life of fulfilment  
In troubled times.

Once again I repeat,  
I have nothing to tell  
Against a male,  
But I have to raise  
My voice against his cruelty  
In so many ways  
Beyond my brimful life  
As a Poet.

– Pravasini Mahakud\*

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*\*Ms. Mahakud is an Odia poet and translator. In addition to twelve collections of Odia poetry and one collection of poetry translated into Hindi, she has published eighteen books translated into Odia from Hindi. She is the recipient of the Odia Sahitya Akademi Award, Jhankar Award, Junior and Senior fellowships from the Ministry of Culture, Government of India. She lives in Dhenkanal, Odisha, India. Email: pravasini12345@gmail.com*

## Statues

Hollow eyes  
peering at us, asking-  
Are you still asleep?  
Those dying in the dark,  
are still passing by morning light,  
their breaths suspended in  
the rebellious ventricle of a decadent republic.  
Gods seem amused  
We break our men to build their flesh.  
Our women cling to shame-  
disrobed to drape our goddesses.  
What is it that we feel, when we walk  
by knaves, saints and heroes-cast in stone?  
Statues rise in my land like famished zombies-each with their unique hunger,  
irrigated with the blood of sheep.

## Insomnia

In the days of sleeplessness,  
dreams have a regret like quality-  
like a scaffolding for memories  
and murals of an age gone by.  
I see people in abandoned buildings  
or shadows of people,  
with made up faces and names-  
almost like a life I could've lived.  
Down the road are monuments  
to grief and guilt, loss and hope.  
There is nobody guarding their doors.  
Yet, I cannot enter.  
Children ready themselves for work  
while adults frolic in the park, over cement elephants and blood red slides.  
I say a prayer backwards and then scratch my name on the sidewalk.  
A city of whims, crumbling,  
under the burdens of its architect.

—Siddhartha Singh\*

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*\*Mr. Singh is a former lawyer who works as an editor and academic counselor. He has been previously published in The Hindustan Times, Verse of Silence and the Scene & Heard. He counts Yehuda Amichai and Avtar Singh 'Pash' among his literary idols, and someday, aims to contribute to India's rich literary tradition in English, Hindi and Punjabi. He lives in Ghaziabad, UP, India. Email: siddharthaliterary@gmail.com*

## After Crossing Seven Seas

After crossing seven seas  
and thousands of miles  
You will touch  
the moist morning soil of my city  
the rising sun will  
get a glimpse of you  
my city will soak itself  
with your presence  
will transform and  
never be  
the same ever  
though I shall  
wait till eternity to see you  
I will touch the moist morning soil of my city  
try to feel the air  
for your fragrance  
look for your footprints  
and write a poem on them  
my words will linger forever  
in the soul of my city  
only you will  
not be there to know  
the longing of your twin soul.

## In This Season of Snow

In this season of snow  
and freezy rain  
you are my winter song  
I wrap myself in you  
and walk hand in hand  
with life  
I have not yet  
stacked you  
in the museum of memories  
I would not be able  
to do so ever  
your telepathic thoughts  
reach me so often  
you mingle in all moments  
of my days and nights  
some souls are inseparable.

– Sangeeta Gupta\*

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*\*Ms. Gupta is a poet, artist and film maker, credited with twelve anthologies of poems in Hindi and three in English. Her poems have been translated into Greek, German, Mandarin, English, Urdu, Bangla and Dogri. She also worked as Advisor (Finance & Administration) of Lalit Kala Akademi, National Akademi of Visual Arts. She retired as Chief Commissioner of Income Tax, Government of India, and lives in New Delhi, India. Email: sangeetaguptaart@gmail.com*

## White Dove

Unaware  
Of human blunders,  
A White dove  
Flew into a war zone  
And landed in the middle  
Of a battlefield

It was so beautiful  
And appealing  
That the warring factions  
Paused the battle  
To admire  
The white dove

They were so engrossed  
In the white dove  
That they forgot about the battle-  
The white dove  
Brought peace and harmony  
And became the symbol of peace

## Peace Map

A school student  
Was asked  
To draw  
The peace map of the world

The student drew a circle  
And handed it to the teacher  
'Where is the peace map?' asked the teacher  
'This is the peace map,' the student replied

Innocence  
Is the soul of truth  
And, child  
Is the soul of innocence

How could a map  
With numerous divisions  
And political boundaries  
Be a world map of peace?

The child  
Could sense peace  
Only when the whole world  
Is without dividing lines...

## Olive Branch

Olive oil  
Is an expensive oil today  
Because it comes  
From the fruits  
That grow on olive branches

Today,  
We grow olive for food  
But there was a time  
When olive was revered  
For the olive branch

There was a time  
When peace was more important  
Than everything else  
And, one way of making peace  
Was by offering an olive branch

## Handshake

When we shake  
Our hands with others  
We accept them as our equals  
We acknowledge them  
As our friends

Handshake  
Is an offering of peace  
And, when it is accepted  
It becomes a bond  
Of peace and harmony

It is like the computer  
And the printer  
They may work independently  
But, together,  
They can work wonders

But a computer  
Cannot work in tandem with a printer  
Unless there is an interface...  
Unless the two of them  
Extend their hands for a handshake

## Symbol of Peace

Three lines  
That rise  
And unite at the top,  
Encircled by a hallow-  
That is the symbol of peace

Where there is unity,  
Peace and harmony  
Will follow suit  
And it will be crowned  
By the circle of peace

When the Sun rises  
Behind the Eiffel Tower  
And forms a circle  
Around the Eiffel Tower  
It becomes the symbol of peace

**–Vincent Van Ross\***

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*\*Mr. Ross is a freelance journalist and writer. Many of his Hindi and English poems have appeared in national and international anthologies and various websites. His articles and features have appeared in most of the newspapers in India including The Hindustan Times, The Pioneer, The Hindu, The Tribune, The Statesman, National Herald, and The Times of India. He has also written a weekly column called 'Musing' for the Bangladesh Newspaper, The Independent.*

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## The Dream of the Hyacinthine

*Nestlings of hyacinth macaws are taken  
and sold illegally. Only 2500 to 5000  
live in the wild today.*

Nest robbers think macaw feathers  
are currency, the young are loot:  
they wait for the noisy overhead  
rattle clatter of the parents, climb  
a jury-rigged ladder, cherrypick  
the unfortunate brood, and kidnap  
them to some air-picaroon. Wild-  
ness matters most in the universe  
of the hyacinthine macaws, captivity  
makes for impostors, drains color.

Swathed in palm shade, he scratches  
field notes in ink: the black eye  
marooned by yellow; beak a pair  
of tin snips; tip a massive curved  
dagger; tongue inlaid with gold;  
tail feathers are a tapering mast;  
rope-like toes rotate palm nuts;  
upper head lighter cobalt; wings  
and coverts, intense ultramarine,  
a dream of electric blue or of jewels.

## Barren Tree

In pantanoso field, the dead tree  
is a hand cradling the heavy nest,  
mudpacked and waterlogged.

Other couples brave the chuva  
torrencial, heavy rains; a chusma  
of friends gathers upstairs and down.

Words spoken seem uncertain  
and flimsy, a thin curtain separating,  
doors and windows varnished shut.

Grief burns in the gut, a pasture's  
controlled fire, a hand smacking  
the stove's flame, the tumbling

pan, full of hot grease. The pair  
is stunned, shellshocked; the pain  
heaves and buckles their knees,

hunches and curls their papel wings.  
Their silent language drip drips  
from beaks, deluges the vacancy.

## Grow Up, Cecropia

In the dead spaces of terra firma,  
the cecropia squats and homesteads,  
settles and covets more blank sky,  
sends the bulk of its children  
across dried allevium to die.

A lucky few grow up and stretch,  
gangly as teenagers, awkward with acne.  
They rebuke the world. Whorled,  
their hands are sticky, haircuts a puzzle,  
lives a sprint, a straight line of sight

to the light, no junked up trunk,  
always outcompeting peers, shrugging  
off any and all distractions, socially  
isolated, warming in solar brilliance  
inside their own greenhouses.

## Drain

Zebu are humped taurines,  
lean, grass-guzzling machines  
bent on grazing crazily. Skin  
flaps, dewlaps sag, and ears  
flop; their legs are weird stilts.  
Heifers and calves are light-  
coated like Charlois. The bulls  
are darker grey, horse-dwarfing,  
black-hummocked behemoths,  
bred for humidity and wading.

To raise well, have pantaneiros  
ride alongside; don't damage  
their hides with whips; give  
them salt licks; drive to fresh  
pasture as the rains shift; keep  
them high and dry; cut palms  
and make pasture; drain the soil  
so they won't get stuck or drown;  
the more pasture, the more Zebu,  
the more pasture, the more Zebu.

## Alarm Whistle

*Capybaras use a series of noises  
to communicate with each other:  
whistles, grunts, squeals, and coughs.*

When he was small, he rode high  
on his father's back to see faces  
of the angry crowd. Coaxed  
and coached him how to float.  
Scampering and freewheeling,  
he froze, hearing pai's whistle  
carrying across the expanse,  
immediately run for home.

When he was old enough, he left  
to travel rivers, to stake his claim,  
to form his own kinfolk. His was  
transitory, distance separated:  
he feigned preoccupation and time;  
some made miraculous escapes.  
He worked diligently to conceal  
his weaknesses; hoped no one noticed.

He tried to keep them safe each day,  
but they are dragged away, body  
by body: they served their purpose.  
There was nothing more to do.  
He checked downriver searching  
for him, ears pricked, intent.  
He waited to hear it on the wind:  
the clear note of his father's whistle.

– Paul Brooke\*

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## Book Reviews

**Katrina Porteous. *Edge*. Hexham, United Kingdom: Bloodaxe Books, 2019, pp. 128, PB. Price: £12, ISBN: 978-1-78037-490-1.**

*Reviewed by*  
**Neal Whitman\***

Born in 1960 in Aberdeen, Katrina Porteous grew up in Country Durham and was graduated by Trinity College, Cambridge, and has studied in the United States at the University of California, Berkeley, and Harvard University. She has made the landscape people of the Northumberland coast her specialization.

In 1959 a lecture C. P. Snow, *The Two Cultures*, was published in which this British scientist and novelist offered his thesis that the intellectual life of western society was split into two cultures: the sciences and the humanities. In her book, *Edge*, published in 2019, Katrina Porteous reflects that, when she was in school nearly half a century ago, she chose to study Arts rather than Science, and now, with this book of poems is trying to make up for that deficit. To that end this is a book, “not so much about science, as a poet’s view of science and the poetry of science ...”

In six decades between 1959 and 2019, many residents of Arts and of Science have claimed dual citizenship and with *Edge*, Porteous deserves its passport. Her language is somehow both simple and monumental at the same time. The charm of Katrina Porteous is in her willingness, now more than midway in her own life journey, to explore the *selva obscura* of astronomy, cosmology, and particle physics without a Virgil to guide her. She is a fearless traveler.

Porteous is a poet who becomes a guide as we ponder the mystery of Life and Death in a Universe that began with a Big Bang. For example, one of my favourite poems is “The Sun Makes a Noise!” which opens with these lines:

The whole Sun – its honeycomb  
Its pomegranate, its brilliant, seething layers –  
Awash with this choirs  
Has no truck with your language. (1-4)

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The poem can be recited in order to hear the celestial music. Though there happens to be no sound in space, a bonus in this book are the links in her Introduction to readings with the electronic music of her collaborator, Peter Zinovieff, set in the Life Science Centre Planetarium in Newcastle. With sound and sight, image after image, their performances burst! Energy emanating and pulsating! The book, on its own, does too.

*Edge* is divided into three poem sequences: “Field”, “Sun”, and the title sequence, “Edge”. Each sequence is, in a way, a single poem and the whole book one long poem. The poem that opens “Field” and the poem that finishes “Edge” are for me bookends that hold the *corpus* upright. Here are lines from the opening and closing poems of this marvelous book.

From the opening poem, “Field”:

When the little ideas slip into their bodies like clothes  
They step through the mirror, enter  
An irreducible level of noise .... (9-11)

But how compelling to have a body. If fact,  
Irresistible. (15-16)

Lines from the ending poem, “Intertidal”

I walk out to the end .... (1)

As far as light can penetrate, until  
There is nothing here but process.  
And I have to turn back. (18-20)

*Edge* might push you not over, but into her two earlier books of poetry: *The Lost Music* (1996) and *Two Countries* (2014) where you will discover her themes of “nature” in its wildest sense and “place” its deepest.



**Kavita A. Jindal. *Manual For A Decent Life*. London: Linen Press, 2020. PB & e-book. pp. 443. Price: £9.99, US\$ 15. ISBN: 978-1-8380603-8-1.**

***Reviewed by*  
Gabrielle Barnby\***

Jindal delivers an odyssey with *Manual For A Decent Life*, a portrait of one woman and the social web that supports and holds her. A woman whose strength is her own.

I am grateful to have been brought to Jindal's work through a collection of short stories *May We Borrow Your Country* by The Whole Kahani. These writers are new territory for me, I am curious to explore further.

Jindal's voice is direct, her narrative crammed with detail after detail. She does not give the 'feel' of a place she grabs the reader by the hand and points at people's cloths, pushes dishes of fragrant food beneath the reader's nose, she whispers behind her hand about sexual attraction.

The central character Waheeda is a muslim single mother, but religion and family ties cannot hold her, cannot define her. Her odyssey through the political and social whirl of Delhi remains grounded in the life events of her friends and family. Compromises must be made between duty and desire, privacy is constantly in conflict with public roles and expectations.

Jindal allows the reader to be privileged to many aspects of life for Indian women. Her female characters span a broad spectrum of social and political viewpoints, there are socialites, climbers, home-makers, traditionalists and radicals. She exposes the desires and complexities of life, from the pressures on professional women to dress and conduct themselves in particular kind of way (no skirts, only trousers) to the fundamental issue of separate toilets to promote female education in the provinces. Jindal also explores the pressure on men to be married and continue their family legacy and the stigma against homosexuality, divorce and childlessness.

Waheeda's liaison with Monish is central to her strength, but she does not want to be dependent on him. She wants release, physical satisfaction and understanding. She organises liaisons when she can fit them into her timetable. The question remains in the reader's mind, how much does Waheeda control her availability and how much is she manipulated by others?

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The collage of Delhi life is dynamic, but underlying strictures of tradition still control life. The growth of Waheeda's ambitions is not without risk. As her public success increases so do the risks of her relationship with Monish. Her honesty, her desire and her fallibility draw the reader through twists and turns to the terrible climax of the narrative.

*Manual For A Decent Life* is a novel filled with energy and sensuality, and Jindal serves a satisfying feast for the adventurous reader.

A manual is a set of instructions, guidelines for how to use an item correctly, to its fullest capacity. This is indeed what Waheeda does with the life she is given. Life directed under her control is full and rich. However, so much more is beyond her control. Beyond the guidelines of tradition, politics and society, in these dark uncharted places, this is where heartbreak lies.



**Ishika Bansal. *My Diary and Other Poems*. New Delhi: Diamond Pocket Books, 2019. PB. Price: Rs. 150. ISBN: 978-93-5296-783-4.**

*Reviewed by*  
**Vijay Kumar Roy\***

*My Diary and Other Poems* is the second collection of poems by Ishika Bansal. It has forty seven poems written on varied themes. Having read her first collection, the present book shows her remarkable maturity in language, diction and style. Through these poems, Ishika tries to prove coming closer to fine poetic craftsmanship. Her poetic world is explorations of values, hard work, hope, and the sublime confidence to achieve all that make one's life 'glorious'.

In this collection, Ishika tries to introduce her poetic world through two "Forewords", "Comments", "Reviews" and "Preface" by some teachers and editors, and "Author's Note" written by herself. These writings help the readers to better understand the poems. Some read poems for pleasure and some read them for research. Ishika's poems can serve both purposes alike.

She begins this collection with the poem, "Word 1" and explains the effects of uttered words in one's life. They come out from one's mouth spontaneously. They are: "Hilarious", "miraculous", "harsh", "discourteous", "inspiring", "surprising", "Life-changing", "sporadically depressing", "Sometimes shattering", and "daring". (Lines 2-6) The effects of words depend on how one uses them so she advises the readers to use "them wisely". In the second poem, "Words 2", she explains different functions of words in one's life as one "can reduce" "stress" by "expressing the feelings" of one's "heart". In order to bring positive changes in "personality", one should be "polite". "Words used in a good manner are like gold" ("Words 2"). In another poem she writes "Our dressing sense can hide the real us for some time / But our words reveal us inside out" ("Clothes Don't Make a Man" 5-6). These words of Ishika are really praiseworthy in this highly materialistic age, when harshness and discourtesy are very much common in expression, and many a time slyness, shrewdness and "Machiavellian deception" dominate over fraternity and integrity.

The title poem of the collection, "My Diary", shows her child like imagination with logical interpretation on the verge of maturity. For her, "thick and heavy" "diary" is "better than teddies and toys" (4-5). Her "diary" gives her "a lot of satisfaction" when she opens it and writes in it (12-13) because it contains all her "secrets, lies and truths" (8). In the poem, "Childhood", she writes that childhood is

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a period of “innocence” and “mischievous behaviour”. It needs “guidance and appreciation”. She has painted a beautiful picture of a child whose presence brings “fragrance of love” in the family. His sweet voice pleases everybody. Even his mischief is a source of joy. When the same child enters a school premises his world starts changing. He becomes a student and this life does not come again, like childhood. This period is full of fun and hustle and bustle. Ishika also paints a lovely picture of a classroom where innocence and experience both go together. It has “good dancers”, “singers” and “orators”.

A lot of noise, teachers yelling at us  
Most probably the fish market  
Or the travellers coming out of the bus

Whistling, whispering and gossiping all around  
Some are extremely happy

For no reason some are frowned (“My Hustling Class” 1-6).

At the time when voice of the common people is suppressed and many times many intellectuals have been politically targeted, Ishika’s poem, “Speak Out” is very relevant. Fear of the power leads to destruction. Whenever the power is misused for suppression and oppression of people, it is the responsibility of all intellectuals to raise strong voice against the power through all platforms available. “Our speech decides the strength we possess / So speak out, be loud / May be you convince someone one day.” (“Speak Out” 3-5) When some people in judiciary, the main stream media and even in academia seem to act as tools in the hands of the political leaders of the ruling party, the role of true patriots becomes vital to protect justice, law and order, and overall morality of human beings.

The poem, “Bonds in Life” gives important message of “love and faith”. This poem can’t be believed to be written by a teenage poet due to its mature language. But the poet’s assertion that she is her own “poetic guide” has led her to maturity: “A little mature in my poems” (“That’s How I Am” 12).

The poem, “Find Out ‘Me’ Time”, is also full of suggestions to have faith in one’s own. She writes that the reasons of happiness should be identified in order to be happy and satisfied. The poem, “Trust Your Instincts” has also the same message. The poem “Be an Actor Not a Reactor” also begins with the similar message: “None of the worldly powers / Will stop you from rising / When you yourself are correct” (2-4). This is an optimistic outlook that enables one “to dream big”. When “grief and pain” enter one’s life, it is hope that helps one to find “A new light to shine once again” (“Each Day, New Light” 1). In another poem she writes, “At last you’ll surely win / If you never lose hope” (“Be an Actor Not a Reactor” 16-17). Living in this world, one comes closer to nature. The poet describes nature and

natural objects and becomes their part. She writes: "I am a chirpy bird's friend / In the blue sky" ("Where Am I" 3-4). In another nature poem, "Dawn Time", she is absorbed in the pleasant scene of the "rising sun" welcomed by the "chirping" of birds and other "marvelous creatures". The love of nature engenders love for beauty. When love and beauty engross a person, he seeks these elements in everything. If he does not find them, he gets totally disturbed. The poet is also in the same situation in the poem, "A Sneak Look Outside." She finds "The archaic beauty" "so pale". She is unable to find "the glistening grounds" and "blooming dales." "The pick-pockets, robbers" all are present everywhere. Negativism spreads fast in society. So the poet urges the people to wake up from the "deep slumber" and bring "a change". The poem "The Other Side of Today's World" has also the same message. In this poem too, she brings to light the ugly face of the present age that is full of "envy, cheating and malice" (3). Religion has lost its true spirit because "rituals" and blind-faith have overpowered it. "The rich go for boasting, the poor make a yell / Caste, religion, race on pinnacle" ("The Other Side of Today's World" 9-10). At the end, again she believes in herself "to beautify" the world with her "worthy hand" ("My worthy Hand").

The poem, "A Creation" reminds us Lord Brahma, the Creator of the universe. The poet is also called Brahma as he is able to create poems as he desires, and like Brahma, the poet also feels delight after his creation. Ishika's poem creates the similar delight to her: "... the whole world I've won / My soul feels alive, a new creation being done." ("A Creation" 7-8)

It has been observed that a person engaged in a creative endeavour likes loneliness. It is loneliness that helps him to create beautiful creations. Ishika also "enjoys such moments" ("Loneliness – A Great Phase in Life"). Life is short so time is very important. It should be used wisely. "Wealth will decline one day" so accumulation of wealth should not be the aim of life. Instead of it, creative work should be done to spread the message of love, brotherhood, peace and harmony. Creativity brings glory to one's life that lasts long.

Above all, Ishika advocates the importance of "hard work", "Dedication" and "determination" to accomplish the set goal of life. She writes, "The best way to predict the future / Is to create it" ("Embellish Up Your Future" 1-2). Such message to the readers in the modern age is noteworthy when there is acute competition in every field. Ishika's poems touch many aspects of life and its complex and interconnected issues giving scope for further creative and critical explorations. The book deserves warm welcome by one and all.



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# Call for Submissions

## AIMS AND SCOPE

*Ars Artium* is an annual international research journal that aims at providing a forum for teachers and researchers for dissemination of knowledge through scholarly and critical articles in the fields of English language, literature, and cultural studies. It also accepts original poetry and reviews of recently published books.

### Scope for research papers:

English Language and Literature

Indian English Literature

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African Literature

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Contributions to the journal in the forms of research papers, poems and book reviews are open for all teachers, researchers, reviewers and creative writers.

All submissions, following the **Guidelines for Authors**, should be addressed to the Editor-in-chief, *Ars Artium* and emailed to: **arsartiumjournal@gmail.com**.

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Authors are requested to adhere to the following guidelines:

### Style and Citation

The journal follows MLA Style (latest edition). The paper submitted must be completely in English. For the quotations in other languages, their English translation must be provided. Quotation of a poem should be followed by the title of the poem under double quotation marks preferably with line number(s) of the poem in brackets; in the case of prose pieces, last name of the author with the page number(s) of the book should be used. Please try to avoid using only page numbers in text.

Quotations up to four lines (both in prose and poetry) should be used in the running paragraph with correct references. Long citations should be indented without changing the font size, and space of a line should be provided above and below the quotations.

### **Length**

Original unpublished:

1. Research paper: In about 3000 to 7000 words, including Abstract (150 to 200 words), Keywords (5 to 7) and Works Cited.
2. Poem: In maximum 20 lines each, maximum five best unpublished poems can be submitted for consideration.
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1. Paper Size: A4 (margin 1 inch on all four sides)
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### **Bio-note and Contact Details**

A fifty-word bio-note of the contributor with brief career history should be provided followed by his/her name, current designation, institutional affiliation (full office address with postal code), mobile number and email address. Full home address with postal code should also be provided.

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